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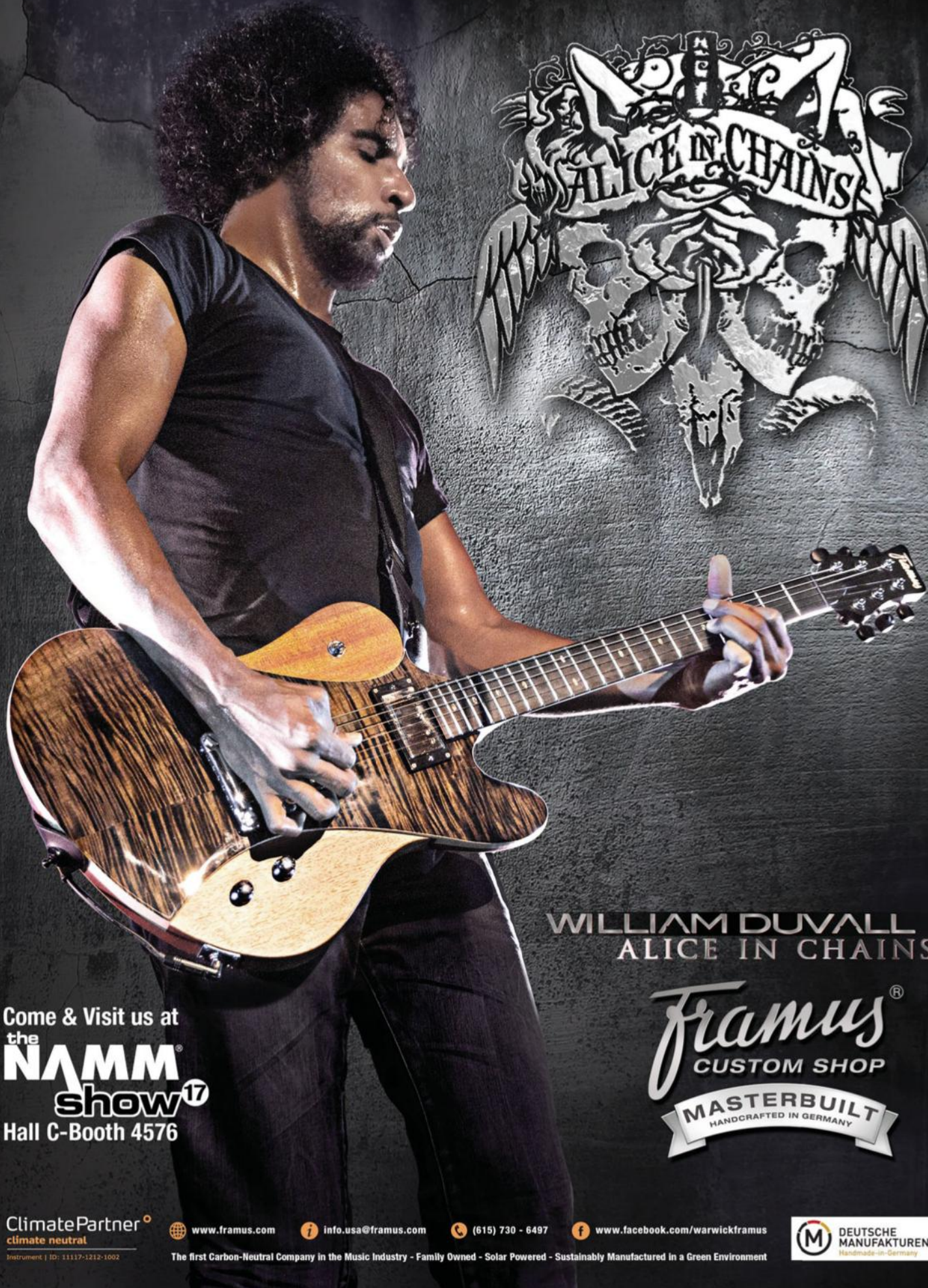


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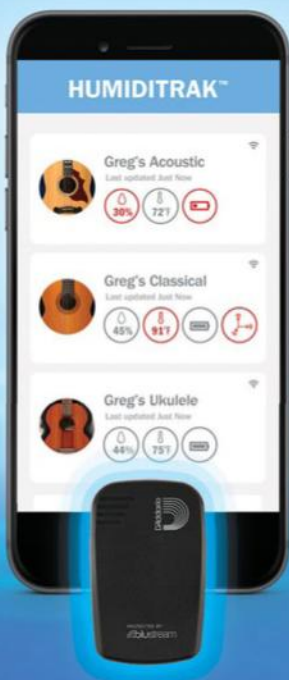
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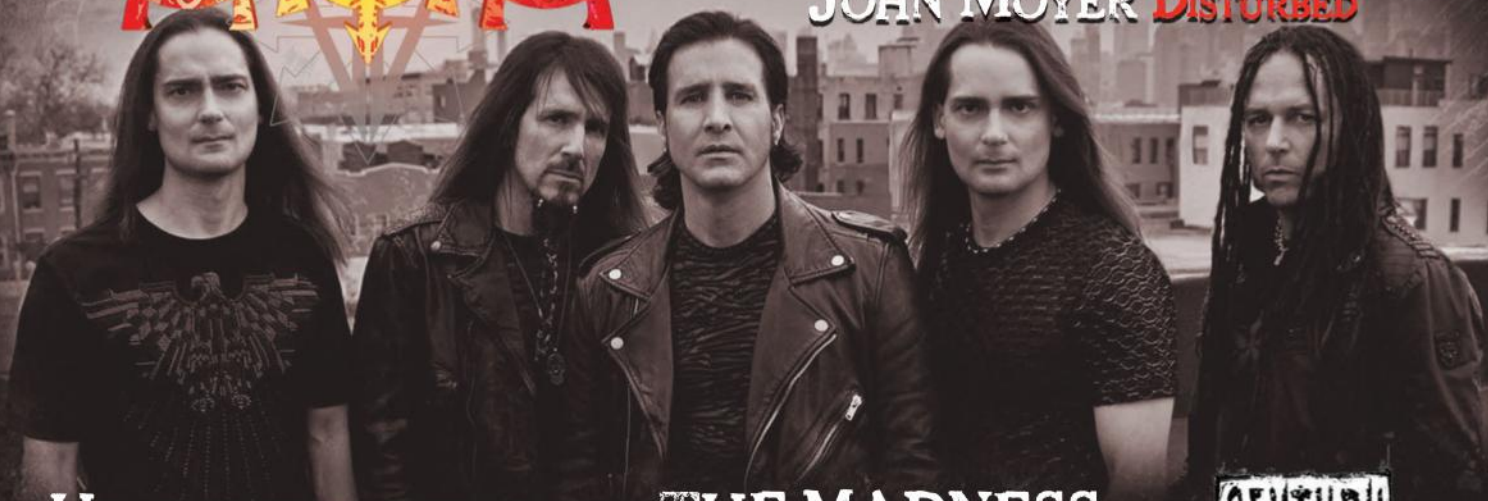


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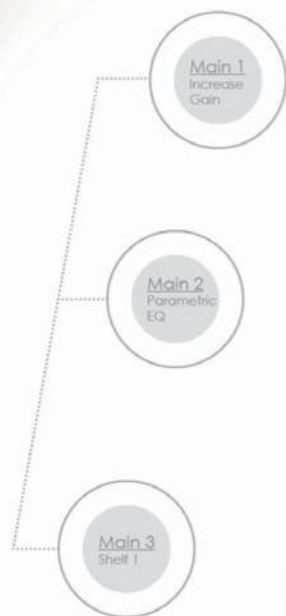
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NOIZE FROM THE EDITOR



A VERY LONG TIME AGO, A VISIONARY NAMED BUD Eastman started a kind of “guitar club” promoted by a newsletter. Initially, the idea was simply to drive more business into Guitar Showcase—a San Jose, California, music store that Eastman owned with his wife, Maxine. When the era’s hippies flooded the store to buy guitar gear and start bands, Bud may have thought, “Hey, perhaps there’s enough interest in this guitar thing to start a real magazine.”

The experiment almost ended right there.

The story goes that he famously asked his buddy Les Paul if he wanted to invest in such a venture, and the ever-entertaining guitar legend answered, “But, Bud, what the heck will you write about after the first issue?”

This was one of the few guitar-oriented things that Les Paul was dead wrong about.

In 1967, Bud launched *Guitar Player* anyway, and, since then, it has struggled, enjoyed massive success, helped birth a market for other guitar magazines across the planet, been lauded and disparaged, launched music careers, nurtured and tortured gear companies, and survived and evolved and achieved its own legendary status. This magazine is ground zero for guitar journalism.

And this year marks a half-century of *Guitar Player*’s celebration of the guitar and all who play it.

It’s almost a miracle. The disruptions in the publishing industry throughout the past decade have killed, neutered, or diminished so many once-powerful media companies. We’ve had numerous challenges, as well. Some of them were quite dangerous and upsetting. But we prevailed, and we’re still standing and still healthy after 50 years. To reach this somewhat rare and awesome milestone, we needed a ton of luck and help.

First and foremost, it’s you readers who have kept the faith and supported the magazine. I know that some of you were there for our first year, and if you were, please email me (mmolenda@nbmedia.com) so that I can figure out some way to recognize and honor your loyalty. Others have been with us for decades or several long years. Without your support, your community, your criticism, and your obsessive enthusiasm for guitar, *Guitar Player* could not have grown and prospered. Period. I sincerely thank all of you for what you have made possible.

We’ve also been blessed with legions of excellent writers whose prose has brought guitar players, guitar techniques, and guitar gear to life in so many thrilling ways. I can’t name you all in this short column, but you know who you are, and so do our readers. Your words are responsible for *Guitar Player* maintaining its credibility, relevance, vibe, and intelligence for 50 years.

In addition, the early editors set an extremely high journalistic standard for future staffs to follow (or else). It all started with Maxine Stock in 1967, then founder Bud Eastman took the reins (1967-1971), followed by Jim Crockett (1972-1977; before serving as publisher), Don Menn (1977-1981), Tom Wheeler (1981-1991), Editorial Director Dominic Milano and Senior Editor Joe Gore (1992-1996), and Richard Johnston (1996-1997).

Finally, scores of groovy gear manufacturers have supported the magazine with not only their ad dollars, but also by providing us—and the guitar community—with so many fabulous toys to test, commend, slam, and argue about. We’d certainly be sadder guitarists without all of the guitars, amps, effects, accessories, and other goodies we adore.

To honor *Guitar Player*’s longevity, the staff is offering bits of groovy “GP50” content in this issue. We’re starting off a bit slow on the fireworks—just like a well-constructed guitar solo—but we’re definitely going to ramp up with some surprises as our 50th year unfolds. I’m so glad that you’re all here—readers, guitar stars, and manufacturers—to experience this momentous anniversary with us. It’s going to be epic!

Michael Molenda

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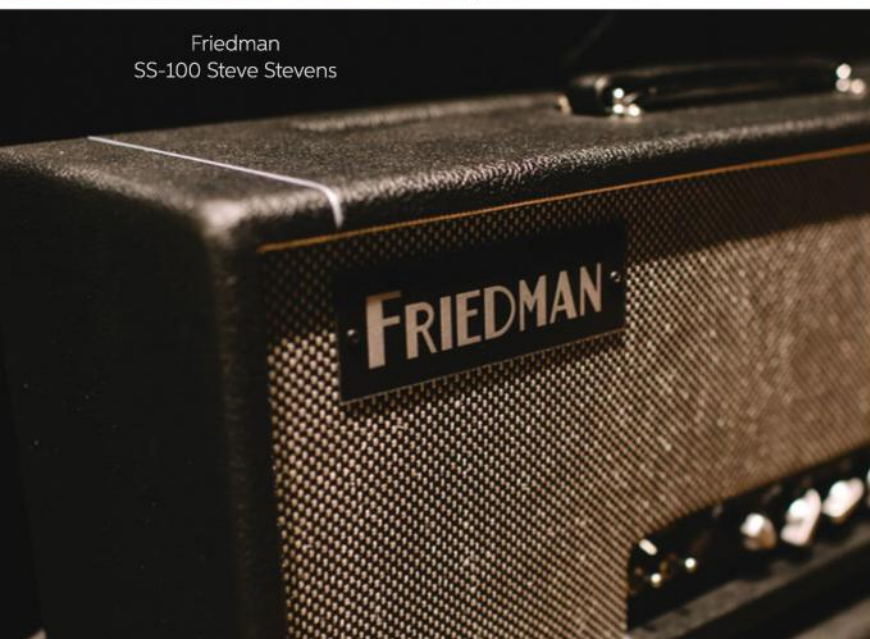
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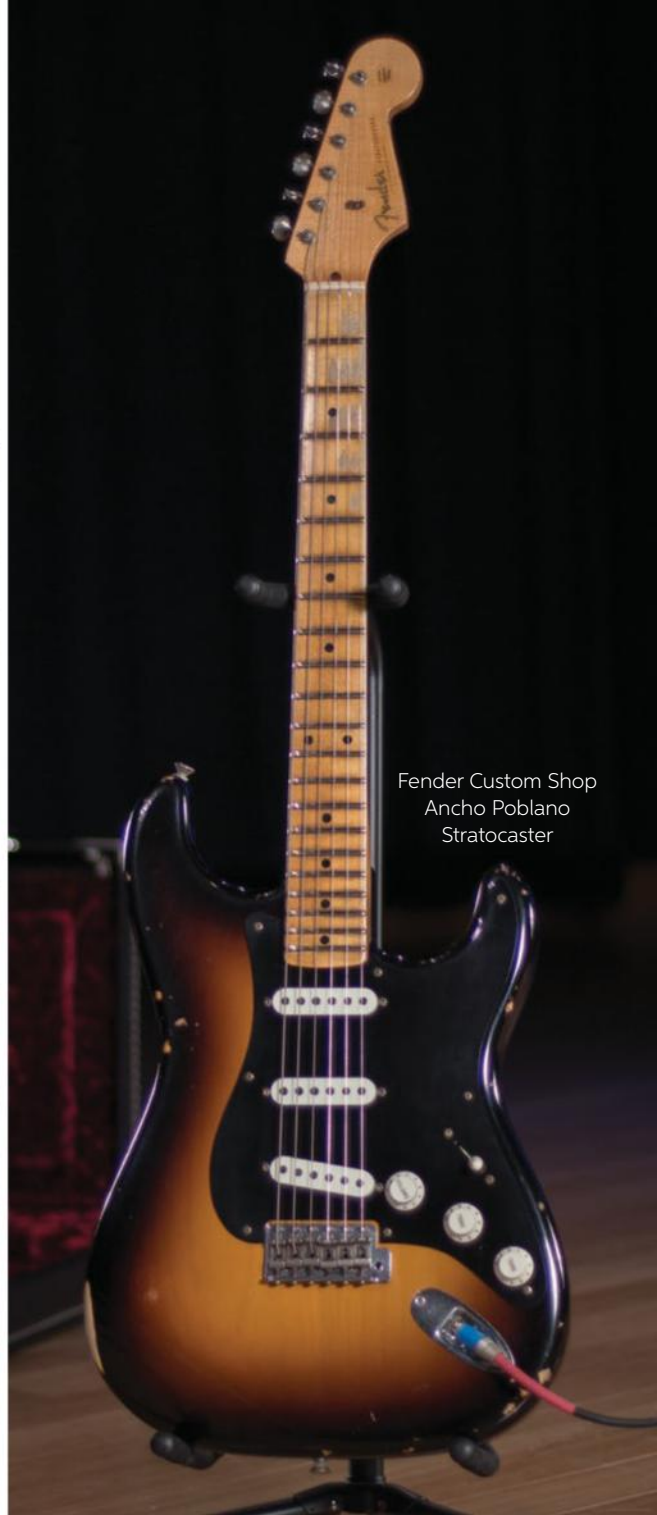
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Guitar Player
50
1967-2017
YEARS

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When *GP* took its first tentative steps into the publishing world 50 years ago, a few major manufacturers jumped right in to support the new venture. We'd like to acknowledge our first-year advertisers, and offer them tons of thanks for believing in Bud Eastman's mad idea: Bigsby, Bill Russell Capo, Coral, Eko, Fender, Gibson, Gretsch, Guild, Hallmark, Heathkit, Hohner, Martin, Mosrite, Rickenbacker, Robb Guitars, Rowe/DeArmond, Standel, Sunn, Vox.

Cover photo: Hristo Shindov

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GP COMMUNITY



I am a professional guitarist/composer and educator, and, for the past eight years, I have been doing music therapy as part of the Mentor and EEK fitness programs here in Riverside County, California, using the guitar as the primary instrument. I take about eight guitars and a couple of ukuleles, and I visit adult day care and rehabilitation centers, as well as high-school special education classes. I give out guitars, and I try to get the people to press anywhere, make shapes, make a sound, and encourage stream of consciousness expression. Popular songs both past and present are interpreted, and great joy is found from the clientele in trying to get different sounds.

For the high-school kids, quite a few can be high functioning, and I teach them notes on the staff and encourage them to draw notes anywhere—on a line or space—all random. Many don't know what notes or pitches they are drawing, but then I read them, loop them, add chords or a rhythm, and have them sing/scream/anything on top. This is their creation. Sometimes, I even record them and make CD-Rs for them. Some of the musical results may be atonal in nature, but what I have noticed is that there is no musical prejudice or classification between the students. Soon, most are enthusiastic, and they want to play and create. —BILLY TSOUNIS



THIS MONTH'S GP50 GEAR CONTEST!

In honor of *Guitar Player's* 50th anniversary, we're giving out some "birthday presents" to our fabulous readers. Thanks to the generosity of our manufacturing partners, we'll "gift" pedals and other gear we've tested for actual *GP* reviews in each issue throughout 2017.

This month—as displayed by *GP's* gear coordinator Dana Parker—Wampler Pedals is offering up seven cool stompboxes: a Tom Quayle Dual Fusion Overdrive, Clarksdale Delta Overdrive, Velvet Fuzz, Sovereign Distortion, Latitude Tremolo Deluxe, Tumnus Overdrive/Boost, and a cataPulp British Distortion.

To enter, simply send an email with the subject line "GP50 Wampler" to mmolenda@nbmedia.com. Deadline for entries is January 20, 2017. We'll select the seven winners at random (one winner for each pedal), and announce their names in an upcoming issue.

Please keep in mind that all contest gear is "as is." This is simply a fun and funky way for the *GP* staff and the magazine's wonderful gear makers to wish a "Happy 50th Birthday" to everyone in the *Guitar Player* universe.



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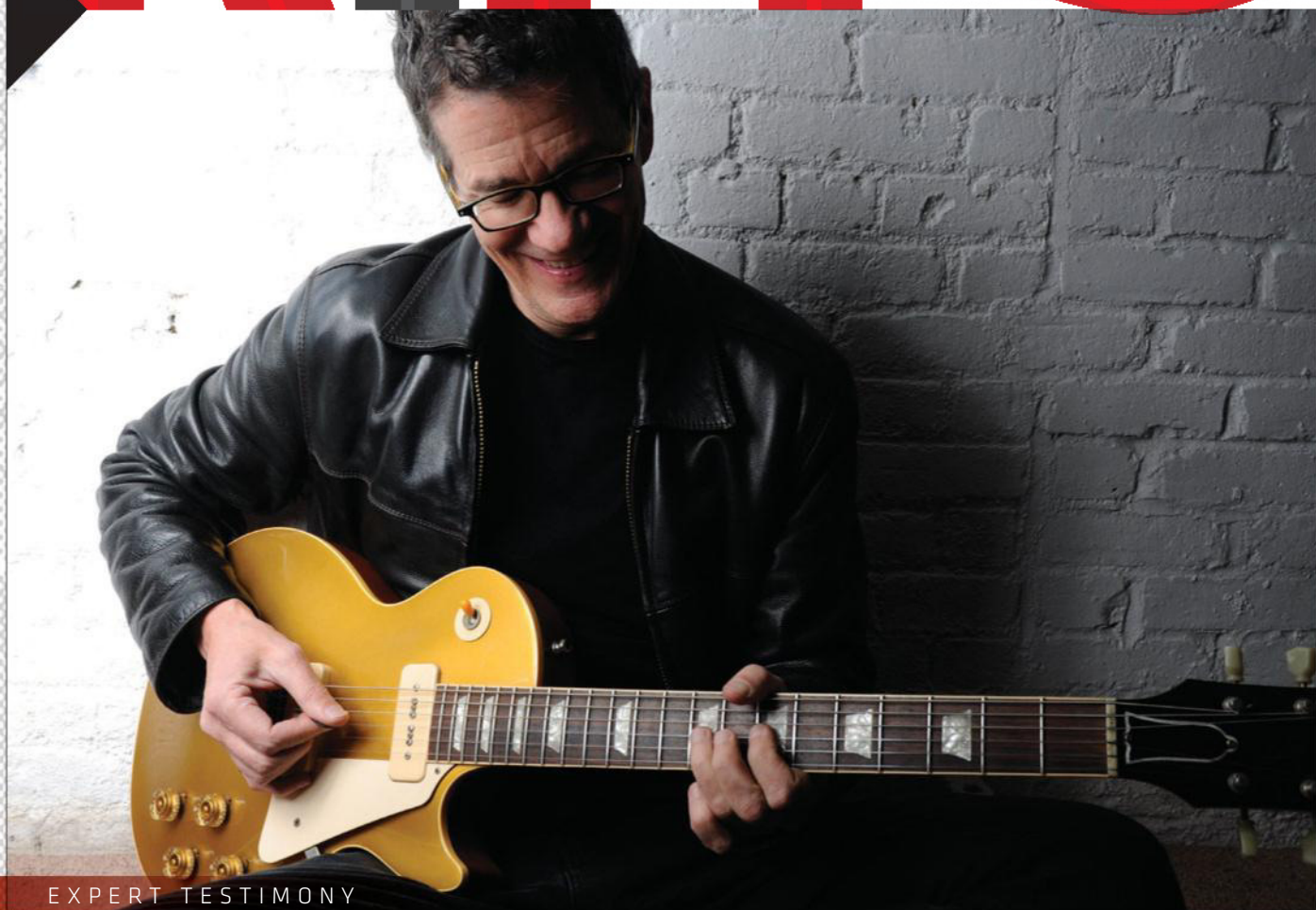
Aggro Acoustics

Metallica's James Hetfield faces off against Neil Young during the 2016 Bridge School Benefit Concert at the Shoreline Amphitheatre in Mountain View, California, on October 22.





RIFFS



JON GORE

EXPERT TESTIMONY

Jon Herington

on Constructing Solos that Don't Suck!

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

JON HERINGTON HAS PERFORMED with Steely Dan since 1999, and founders Walter Brecker and Donald Fagen are far from slouches when it comes to evaluating guitar solos. (To quote Bill Murray from *Stripes*: “That’s the fact, Jack!”) But

as delightfully terrifying as that gig can be for a guitarist, Herington is definitely up for the challenge, and in addition to Steely Dan, his exquisitely crafted solos have graced projects for Boz Skaggs, Bette Midler, Madeleine Peyroux, and others. He

has also released five albums as a solo artist. His latest, *Adult Entertainment*, is what he calls “pop music for grownups,” and many of his solos pay tribute to the players who inspired him as a youngster.

Your last album, *Time On My Hands*, presented a singular guitar sound, but *Adult Entertainment* rocks a lot of different solo tones.

Because this album is full of allusions to the music of my youth, I abandoned a set formula and went for sounds that worked with each individual song. I loved that Stones records back in the

day would have a country tune, a Motown cover, some Chicago blues, and a pop song, and nobody blinked. The records hung together because of the way the band sounded. So I used my Larry Wysocki Tele-style on “Little Big Shot” as a nod to Jimmy Page. “Blacklisted in Bougieville” is my take on the Beatles’ three-guitar trade-offs during “The End,” and “No Way No How Not Me” has a Monkees’ vibe—when they used to do Carl Perkins-style stuff—with the Tele-style in the first half of the solo and a Gretsch in the last half.

Did the sounds you chose while recording stay put, or did you re-amp tones in the mix?

I make choices and stick to them—I never got into re-amping. I listen to the track, and decide quickly whether a tone is going in the right direction. I try not to get too fussy, and I always wonder if I should be working harder at it [laughs].

Do you print your solos with effects, then?

I usually monitor with reverb or delay, but I save the effects for the mix. Though, the wild solo on “Handle Me with Care” was printed with effects, because I didn’t want to lose the crazy studio delays I had going when I tracked it.

What’s your process for developing solos?

I usually start by improvising several takes—that’s where the freshest stuff comes from. Once I get a beginning I like, I start arranging parts like a composer, and I’ll punch in to get fragments going that connect well together. It’s a combination of improvising, listening, and then saying, “I wish you wouldn’t do *that*” [laughs]. It may take a couple of hours to get a complete

solo from doing these separate takes, and, often, I’ll learn what I did and play the whole thing over again to get a more organic feel. Sometimes, I’ll just go with editing the good bits together.

A lot of players forge the outlines of their solos through improvisation, and I always wonder how they choose the gems from all of the takes.

It’s hard to open the faucet, let things flow, and then go into cleanup mode. Those are very different hats to wear. But I’ll ask myself, “Does this solo grab you by the throat? How can I one-up myself here? What would make this better?” I basically try to imagine what I wish I could improvise. Then, I chip away at the solo until it’s there. I think if you regularly sit down and compose what you hope you could improvise, you’ll find powerful things to bring to your personal repertoire.

When crafting your solos, are there any hiccups from juggling the guitarist, the composer, and the producer?

Absolutely. You have to surrender to the demands of the song, and that’s always tough for me, because I want my guitar tone to have a full range with lots of low end and a big, beautiful stereo reverb. When you get to the mix session, you realize that’s not going to work. You have to place it in the mix so that the guitar doesn’t step on the other stuff that needs to be there. If you dwarf a drum track with the guitar tone, for example, the only person who’s going to want to listen to the song is the guitar soloist [laughs]. You’re not going to get people interested that way. You want the whole thing to gel as a song. ■

VINYL TREASURES

BY JIM CAMPILONGO



Merle Haggard

Okie From Muskogee



WAY BACK IN 1980, I WALKED

into Village Music in Mill Valley, California, and as I sifted through the records, I found Merle Haggard’s *Okie From Muskogee*. This 1969 live LP changed my musical life. At the time, I had no exposure to country music other than *Hee Haw* and *Urban Cowboy*, but the two-dollar price tag for this album seemed worth spending to have a chuckle while listening to a “right-wing country guy” rail on hippies. But when I put the record on the turntable, I was floored by the beautiful melodic songs sung by a virtuoso singer with lyrics I could actually relate to. The cherry on top was Roy Nichols’ amazing guitar work, which was a revelation.

Roy’s contributions to country guitar are monumental, and his influence on me—and almost every guitar player—is significant, whether you know it or not. A child prodigy who started playing with Rose Maddox at 16, and then moved on to Lefty Frizzell and Wynn Stewart, Roy helped carve out the Bakersfield sound before securing a permanent chair with Merle Haggard for more than 22 years.

On *Okie From Muskogee*, I was

humbled by Roy’s blazing guitar on “Working Man Blues” and “No Hard Times.” When I attempted to learn his solo and fills to “If I Had Left It Up to You,” I was further tested by his subtlety and lyricism. At the time, the legato slurs and subtle bending were too challenging for my then ham-fisted, British-blues technique. I spent many hours redefining my left- and right-hand skill set after that!

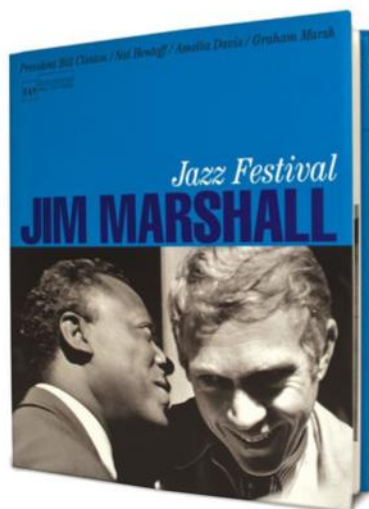
Roy’s solo on “No Hard Times” is in my Top Ten of all-time great guitar solos. He employs open strings, crafty bends, and vocal-like sustain that sounds like two or three guitarists at once. While his solos appear so off-the-cuff and relaxed, if you actually play his lines, you’ll appreciate the intellectual complexity and pure muscle they require.

Okie From Muskogee also includes Haggard’s version of “I Am a Lonesome Fugitive.” This song also appeared on Roy Buchanan’s self-titled Polydor album from 1972, which led me to discover that Nichols was a great influence on Buchanan. This was another revelation to me in 1980, when pre-Internet times made record shopping an archeological dig. ■

PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

Jazz Festival, Jim Marshall

BY PAUL HAGGARD



Lou Rawls offers Big Mama Thornton a light backstage at the 1964 Monterey Jazz Festival.



UNLIKE A CONCERT DATE, THE EXPERIENCE of a music festival is often much more than the presentation of the performances onstage. For attendees and musicians alike, there are layers of activity surrounding the moments of downbeats and final crescendos. Glimpses of these can often pass into the ether of memory unless preserved under the watchful eye of a curatorial documentarian.

Jim Marshall [1936–2010] was one such photographer, and during the heady 1960s, his presence at the jazz festivals in Monterey, California, and Newport, Rhode Island, allowed the capture of images from scenes unfolding both onstage and off with careful clarity.

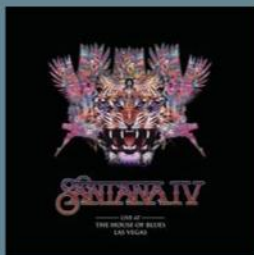
This book is a vital record of a transitional period of both jazz and American culture from the ending of the bebop era towards one of more modern styles. Images on the pages reveal intimate moments between musicians, the audience, the media, the cops, the crew, and others, with the gathering of the festivals as the common bond. Brilliant in their up-close, candid, black-and-white crispness, Marshall's photos invite everyone backstage, and give them a seat in the room to witness seemingly firsthand the interaction of performers, vendors, media, and all who were fortunate enough to attend these celebrations from this bygone time. **R**

SWIFT VERDICTS



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Honoring 25 years since they got together in tribute to fallen Mother Love Bone singer Andrew Wood, the Seattle supergroup featuring members of Soundgarden and Pearl Jam still sounds razor sharp. Mike McCready played lead foil to Stone Gossard's churning rhythm, and Chris Cornell's howling vocals with bassist Jeff Ament and drummer Matt Cameron completely killing it on the foundational front. —**JL**



LIVE AT THE HOUSE OF BLUES, LAS VEGAS
SANTANA IV

I can't imagine Santana fans—or fans of guitar—being anything but thrilled with this March 21, 2016 live set bringing Carlos Santana and Neal Schon together again. It's a blaze fest to be sure, but each player also honors the classic melodies and gives each other the space to explore new interpretations. And the grooves! Oh, my, my. Transcendent. **Eagle Rock Entertainment.** —**MM**



MR. SENATOR
MURALI CORYELL

Coryell churns out some delightful bluesy rock and soul here—and dares to tackle "Higher Ground" and "This Masquerade" without faltering—with his typically clean and lovely guitar tones. Inspired by the 2016 election, the guitarist definitely created tracks that evoke the funk and fear, while simultaneously bringing on some soulful joy and hope. **Shake-It-Sugar.** —**MM**



DEATH RACE
MAGNETIC

Rafael Moreira is one of the kings of TV show guitar (*The Voice*, *American Idol*), and his *Magnetic* project showcases all the tastiness, tone, speed, and melodicism he needs to display when backing other musicians in front of millions of television viewers. This is a great hard-rock album that's filtered through the jubilant and funky phrasing of his native Brazil. **Apple Music.** —**MM**

Music Money

BY MICHAEL A. ACZON

“I FOUND AN INVESTOR” ARE FOUR words that often change careers and relationships. When accepting money from the range of a well-meaning friend or family member who supports your artistry all the way to a sophisticated investor trying to buy their way into the entertainment business, here are a few things to think about before taking the dough for your show.

▪ **Evaluate your relationship.** Is this a person you have a longstanding relationship with, or is it a total stranger? Is this person familiar with your artistry and the music business? If this person was introduced to you, what is your relationship with the “middle man?” Do you have clear enough boundaries to balance a personal relationship by introducing money into the equation?

▪ **Characterize the cash.** Have a clear understanding of what your investor expects in return for their money. A gift has no expectation of return, a loan has an expectation of repayment—often with interest—and an investment has an expectation of return in the form of cash, ownership, or both for sharing the risk of your project.

▪ **Clarify the commitment.** Be very clear with each other how much money will be changing hands, and when payments will be made. Having open-ended financial commitments such as the cost of a new rig, the production budget for an album, or tour support are invitations to disaster. Express dollar figures—including minimum and maximum

amounts when necessary—to avoid surprises.

▪ **Talk about terms.** A mutual understanding of what a money person gets in exchange for their dollars is crucial. This varies widely, ranging from something as simple as free tickets and autographed t-shirts acknowledging crowd funding donations, all the way to ownership of your business and intellectual property (such as your band or company name, musical compositions, and master recordings) for investment money. Your understanding of the boundaries and value of what you are giving away in exchange for money is very important, and it can have long term implications—especially if you have not realistically evaluated what the fruits of your labor are worth.

▪ **Document your dollar deal.** Properly documenting your mutual understanding goes a long way for both parties. This can be as simple as a “thank you” note for a gift, to using a form for a promissory note for a loan, to as complex as hiring a lawyer for the drafting of complicated regulatory filings and various agreements for a corporation that’s being formed with a major capital investment. When it comes to documentation, it’s wise for both parties to participate in the drafting process.

By balancing enthusiasm with clarity, you can make sound decisions and deals when it comes to financing your projects and your career. ■



Back with Brooks & Dunn

BY CHARLIE CROWE

JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS 2014, Brooks & Dunn and Reba McEntire announced a dual Las Vegas residency at Caesar’s Palace for the summer 2015. Throughout my guitar-tech gig during Miranda Lambert’s winter tour, I got the occasional, “Are you going back with them?” I always answered, “I don’t know. I’m happy here with you guys.”

But just before the Academy of Country Music Awards that year, Kix Brooks emails me and asks if I’d join Brooks & Dunn for the ACM gig. How do I say “no” to that? I reply, “I’ll be there working with Miranda, but the two performances are far enough apart where I can take care of her guitar player and still have time to suit up for you guys.” When the ACMs roll around, I’m probably the only guy in the history of awards shows to be a backstage tech for one headlining act and an onstage performer with another. Miranda is very cool and supportive—though she asks, “Am I losing you to Vegas?”

After the ACM smoke cleared, Kix called me onto his bus, and says I’ve made the cut for Vegas, and I’m also being hired to play in Reba’s band for ten dates without B&D. Thankfully, Miranda is pretty much done for the year, and she graciously allows me to hire a substitute guitar tech in order to gig with B&D/Reba and maintain my gig with her. When the bus rolls back into Nashville, I rush home, kiss the family, and get into grindstone guitar mode. I have two weeks to brush up on 90 minutes of B&D material and also learn 90 minutes of Reba’s songs.

I feel a second act has been gifted from the show-biz cosmos, and I plan to hang on to tooth and nail until my fingers stop moving. I currently have the best of both worlds. Two years ago, I thought my run was over. Now, I’m either backin’ the stars or tuning their guitars. Crazy.

By the way, that former guitar tech for Eddie Van Halen who I beat out for the Miranda gig? He’s now my tech for the Reba/B&D gig. Deep down, he probably wants to kill me. ■

FAIR PLAY

Long-time readers know I detest segregating sexes and styles in music. Call it my hippie dream to have all guitarists celebrated, criticized, and enjoyed as one homogeneous group of music makers. When Bud Eastman founded Guitar Player in 1967, he absolutely must have felt the same, because GP has covered everyone equally—regardless of demographic. But, let's face it, there is scant equality in coverage for female guitarists even today. So I'm defying my own "non-exclusion ruling" to launch this historical column honoring the badass women guitarists GP featured in its first few years. —MM

Terry Garthwaite

ON STAGE WITH THE JOY OF COOK-ing, Terry Garthwaite, guitarist/vocalist, is essentially more vocal than instrumental. However, there is more to being a guitarist than merely picking out hot licks. Terry plays syncopated 6- and 12-string rhythm and fill-ins to the keyboard of Toni Brown, who also sings and plays steel guitar. The band rehearsed for over a year before they actually broke professionally.

"We were playing strictly acoustic for about six months," says Garthwaite. "I played a 12-string acoustic. But, after we got a drummer, we gradually went more electric because we had to hear ourselves over the drums."

In the change from acoustic to electric, Garthwaite felt it was easier to play the electric because the touch was lighter. She plays a vintage, full-acoustic archtop Harmony that was rebuilt into an electric for

her with two humbucking pickups on it. She also had a Gibson SG Standard, that got ripped off, so she bought an SG Custom.

"I liked my Standard better for some reason," she says. "I also have a '53 Martin 000-18 and a really old Martin 0-28 around the house."

Garthwaite plays her electric axes mostly with bare fingers.

"That's because I always played acoustic that way," she says. "I feel like I'm more in touch with my guitar."

Off stage, she will occasionally work out some lead patterns in *E*, but she mainly focuses on jazz chording. For strong rhythms she uses a heavy Fender pick and Lundberg heavy-gauge strings, but has toyed with lighter-gauge Ernie Ball Slinky and Darco Funky strings.

Because Garthwaite is a female guitar player, we wondered if there were any

hassles as a result of her gender.

"I know the reason some interviewers are picking up on our band is because there are two chicks in it, and that's unusual," she says. "I mean, I can look around me and see that is unusual, but it's happening, and eventually it will evolve. It doesn't bother me—not unless somebody wants to make something funny out of it. Then, maybe I'll do a double take, but I don't know where to take it. You know, somebody wrote a review once and made some comments about having to close their eyes and forget that there were women in the band, but that it was good music. Because of women's lib coming at this point in time, it makes it all the more of an issue, but I'm not involved in that. I'm just doing my own natural thing that I have always done." —Excerpted from Michael Pierce's profile in the August 1971 issue. ■

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QUICK TIP

SHREDDING AND SONGWRITING

"I've been around a lot of blokes all my life who play electric guitars really loud—all fiddle-y this and fiddle-y that—and who are complete fascists about how a guitar should be played and all that. But very few of these men can write a fking song, or actually hold a melody down—which, to me, is what makes music music."** —BETH ORTON



SESSION FILE

My '70s Guitar Tones

BY STEVE HUNTER

I HAVE BEEN ASKED MANY TIMES throughout my career about how I got some of my sounds back in the 1970s. First off, there weren't a lot of options. It was basically: "Plug one end of the cable into the guitar and the other into an amp." But there were some variables that allowed for quite a variety of tonal possibilities.

We have all heard that tone comes from your fingers and left and right hands, and that is absolutely true. I did a lot of practicing in my early days with the guitar unplugged, and it worked for me, because I could hear exactly what was coming off the guitar before it hit an amplifier. Now, if you can make it sound good on the guitar acoustically, then it should sound fab through an amp.

Another variable was the gauge of your strings. Through all of the Alice Cooper and Lou Reed albums in the '70s, I used .008s. I preferred them for the bending possibilities, but also because they had a certain "twang" that made them sing when you soloed. I found that slightly larger gauge strings lost that for me. Of course, the guitar and its pickups also had an impact. I believe Seymour Duncan and Larry DiMarzio may have been dabbling with rewinding coils and changing magnets, but there wasn't a lot going on with custom pickups back then. So we'd pick a guitar with stock pickups that sounded good to us. I leaned towards Gibsons with either PAFs or P90s, and I still like the sound of those pickups today.

But the real nitty gritty of the tones we got came down to how the amp and guitar worked together. For example, I almost never cranked up a Marshall all the way. In the studio with [Alice Cooper and Lou Reed producer] Bob Ezrin—and depending on whether we were doing a rhythm



part or a solo—we would make little adjustments between the amp's volume and the guitar's volume. On rhythm parts, we would often turn the amp up to about 6 or 7, but then roll back the guitar's volume to around 8. That always seemed to work best for a solid and powerful rhythm sound with just the right amount of distortion. Tracking solos was usually the time I'd crank the guitar up all the way—although not always—and I tended to prefer the neck pickup. For the solos I did on the first half of Aerosmith's "Train Kept A Rollin'," I used a Les

Paul TV Special with one P90 straight into an ancient, tweed Fender Twin that was *cranked*. I still love that sound, and I was very sad when I heard that amp had blown up.

By the way, the four-input configuration of the '70s-era Marshalls produced some great tones. Channel one was a little brighter and channel two was a little warmer, and, of course, we occasionally used the jumper technique Jimi Hendrix used to route channel one *into* channel two. I really liked that sound—a little more so with the 50-watt Marshalls I preferred to use in the studio, as they had a sweeter all-around tone than the 100-watt Marshalls (which were great for live performance).

As you can see, the tones we got back in the day were basically a dance between the volume of the amp and the volume of the guitar. The rest came from how you played—how much you would dig in, whether you played close to the bridge or close to the neck, the kind of pick you used, and so on. I love the infinite variety of sounds technology makes possible these days, but there is still something to be said for those "simple" tones of the '70s. ■



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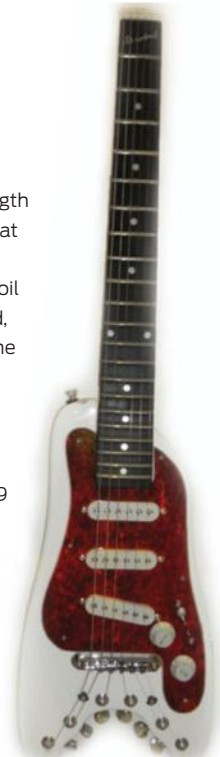
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—THE HUFFINGTON POST

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FEATURES

Metal Special!

5 ACTS SHOWCASE THE EVOLUTION OF SHRED

EARLIER THIS YEAR, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL'S NEIL Shah reported "heavy metal has become the unlikely soundtrack of globalization." Under the headline "The World Goes Head-Banging," the article told of metal's popular dominion from Scandinavia to Russia to Latin America, Japan, Indonesia, and beyond. Depending on when you check the stats, Spotify will claim the most loyal streaming audience is for either metal or rap.

Of course, the cool aspect of metal's continuing cultural upsurge—even if you don't dig the enraged cookie monster vocals

avored by some bands—is that the guitars are loud, proud, and front and center. Not only that, both the old guard and the newbies typically embrace technique that's frighteningly precise and fast, alternate tunings that expand the instrument's range, and technology—given the number of metal players adding Kemper Profiler amps and other high-tech tools to their rigs. We interviewed five metal acts with recent or upcoming releases—Aeges, Invidia, Miss May I, Once Human, and Wolf Hoffman—to reveal how they keep the music vital.

Aeges

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

WHEN AEGES GUITARISTS/VOCAL-ists Cory Clark and Kemble Walters and their band mates Tony Baumeister (bass) and Mike Land (drums) first signed on to record *Weightless* [Another Century] with producer Bob Marlette (Black Sabbath, Rob Zombie, Anvil), they may not have known they'd have to write 30 songs before Marlette found the 13 tracks everyone ultimately deemed worthy to grace the album. But the Los Angeles-based band—which fuses savage guitars with shimmering delays and ambient vistas—persevered and delivered a modern-metal epic.

Thirty songs? Wow. It must have been an intense pre-production process for *Weightless*.

Walters: Bob said every song had to *fight* to be on the record. He'd say, "Where's the melody? There always has to be something singing—even if it's not the singer. What are



Cory Clark (left) and Kemble Walters.

the drums doing? The bass? Where's your hook?" When we were writing, we'd think, "That's cool. That's a hook." But after Bob would make us really listen to the songs, we'd say, "Oh, I guess that's not as hook-y as we thought it was." Also, we tried to throw a wrench into every song. Although we challenged ourselves to write catchy songs, we'd also throw in an odd meter that comes out of nowhere, or a big riff that turns a pop song into something unexpected.

How did the guitar duties for the album play out?

Walters: We never give each other specific roles, because we're both very different guitar players. A good example would be "Save Us." I had done a complete solo—just bulldozing with this heavy fuzz—and then I heard Cory noddling around on something very different. So I said, "Why don't we start with your cleaner, prettier melody, and then I'll come in and bulldoze with all this angst?"

Clark: After the main rhythm guitars were done, doing the "color parts" was kind of a free-for-all. Bob tends to mix as he records, so he would ask for a lot of stuff on the spot, and whoever grabbed the guitar first got the call. He'd say things like, "Hey, man, we need a chimy part for this section." It was a challenge, but we wanted to impress this guy, you know?

What types of guitar rigs did you guys go for?

Clark: Mostly, I used my Les Paul, but this album was really part-specific, so we wanted to have a couple of different tones on each song. We always have a fuzzy guitar on things, but we also went for some Telecaster spank and some chime. We did a lot of layering. In fact, we recorded way too many guitars. Bob wanted a lot of choices at the final mix, but when we got the rough mixes, the songs were really cluttered. There were too many guitar tones fighting each other. As a result, there was so much stuff we didn't end up using.

Walters: Bob had a bunch of guitars hanging on the wall—including a '50s gold-top Les Paul that sounded good on everything. There was also a prototype baritone Fender Telecaster that we used a lot, as well as some Danelectros for the jangly stuff. Other than that, I pushed for my Reverends, because I freaking love them. One is a



Invidia's Marcos Medina (left) and Brian Jackson.

prototype that they never ended up making, and I also have a Reverend Descent baritone with Railhammer pickups.

Clark: In the control room, Bob has a bunch of really great heads set up, and we would A/B which ones sounded better in the track. There was also a soundproofed amp room and a bunch of speaker cabinets already miked up. I go for cleaner amps, and then I smash them up with my pedals. I think I usually went with a Fender or a Wizard for my tracks.

Walters: I had my Soldano, my Orange OR-50H, my late-'60s Fender Dual Showman, and my Vox AC30. The heavier guitar tracks usually had a Wizard for the chunky clarity, a Bogner set somewhat clean, and either the Vox or the Orange for my tone. We'd commit to a couple of different amps per track, and hit the front of them with all these crazy pedals.

And how crazy were all of those pedals?

Walters: Well, it was mostly about the fact we were using so many [laughs]. I had a Dunlop Band of Gypsys Fuzz Face Mini, and that thing totally changed the way I played a couple of chords. For example, the heavy rhythm guitar on the choruses of "What If" is the Band of Gypsys reacting to the Wizard, the Bogner, and the Vox. It just spits out these crazy harmonics. The other one that's on every song is the MXR Custom Shop Sub Machine. It really helped clarify our low tuning [Walters and Clark tune the low E to either A or B, with the rest of the strings in standard tuning]. We also had Wampler pedals, EarthQuaker Devices pedals, a bazillion Dunlop and MXR pedals, and a bunch of weird pedals my friends made me. We'd say, "Can we use all 200 pedals on this record [laughs]?"

Clark: I tend to do more of the atmospheric, delay-shimmering stuff. I would just grab my Les Paul and run through my delay pedals. The go-to delay was a Way Huge Supa-Puss—it's all over the record. I love the delay trails it produces, and it really helped notes stand out. It's kind of like an Electro-Harmonix Memory Man, but a bit more modern sounding.

Walters: One cool thing that was at the end of every effects chain was the Pete Cornish Brian May Treble Boost. I think all it does is push 3kHz at 20dB, and it's an amp killer. If you're not playing, it just squeals. But it made those amps and pedals cut through anything.

Clark: Bob had a friend who was a pedal collector. He wasn't even a player. He had boxes of all these Pete Cornish pedals—the whole floor was littered with them. It was great. That Treble Boost was really our secret weapon, though.

What's it like out there these days for young bands?

Clark: There are too many bands, everybody's trying to get attention, and rock music isn't the most popular thing at the moment. But if you think like that, then you won't do anything.

Invidia

BY MICHAEL MOLEND

Forged from elements of alt metal, metalcore, industrial, goth metal, nu metal, and groove metal—thanks to its members' service in bands such as Five Finger Death Punch, In This Moment, and Skinlab—Invidia

recently completed its debut release, *As The Sun Sleeps* [SPV], with producer/co-writer Loren Mader. Tracking was completed with founding guitarist Brian Jackson, and Marcos Medina was added as co-guitarist just before the band started touring.

What are your current rigs?

Jackson: I'm currently playing a custom Schecter Hellraiser and a couple of 7-string Blackjacks. Also, it's the first time we ran with Kemper Profilers. They've been amazing.

Medina: I'm also rocking that Schecter Keith Merrow Signature, a couple of Gibsons, and the Kemper.

Jackson: Logan introduced me to the Kemper when we started recording *As The Sun Sleeps*, and I fell in love with it right away. It's great for touring. We're on the road right now, and we're not even using speaker cabinets. We just plug our Kempers directly into the house sound system. I don't think I'll ever play anything else.

Are there any challenges to monitoring the Kempers onstage when you go direct?

Medina: Not everybody is familiar with the Kemper "whole rig" situation yet. We run everything on our in-ears, so we're fine onstage. We hear everything loud and clear. But, sometimes, we have to work around the P.A. system or the soundperson we get that night.

When you perform live, do you think your audience can tell the difference between the Kemper models and actual amps?

Jackson: We've been reliant on the bands we tour with to tell us what's going on with our tone. So far, the response is that it sounds amazing.

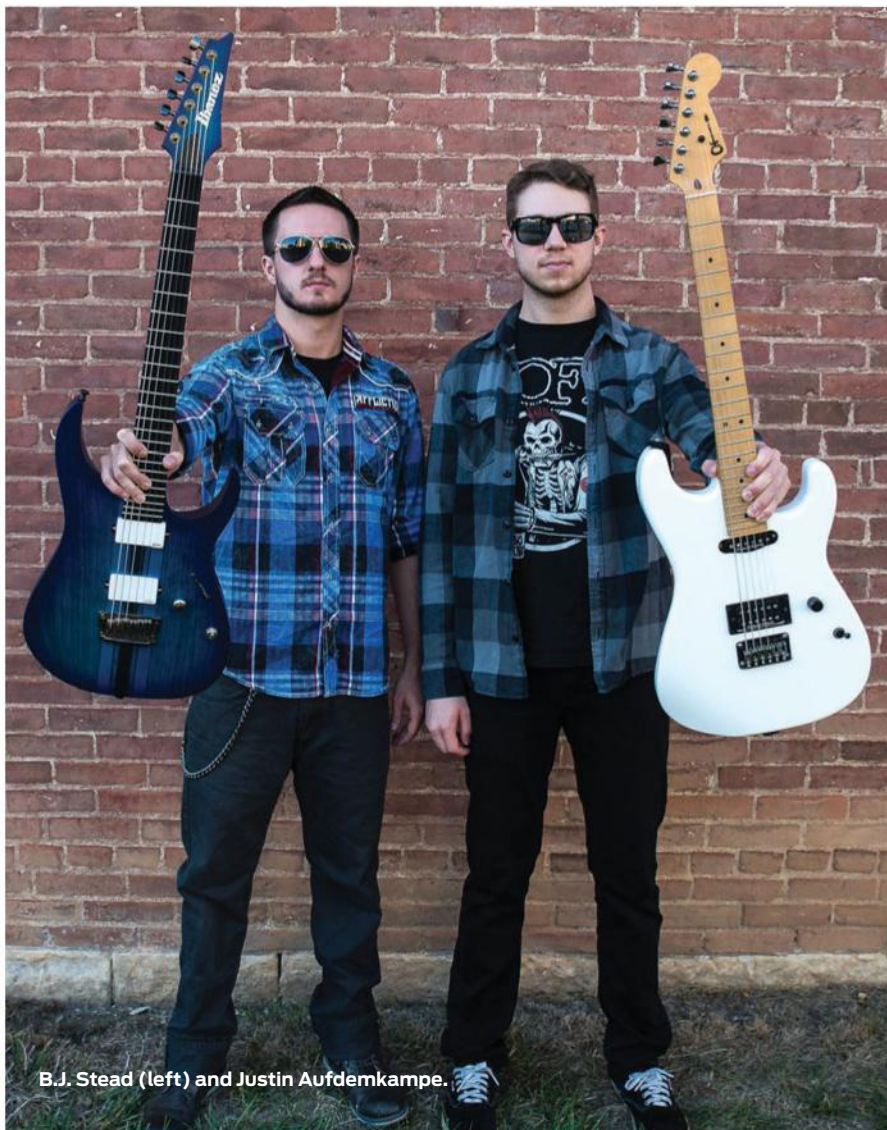
Do you go for different sounds onstage?

Medina: As far as the live show goes, we're projecting a similar tone, rather than trying to make it sound like two different guitar players.

Jackson: There's a slight difference to our tones, but not a whole lot. We complement each other for the bigger picture of the whole band. We want the songs to be the main focus—not have one of us be one of those "look at me" guitar-hero types.

Marcos, as the newest member of the band, what influences do you bring to the table?

Medina: I don't necessarily look to guitar players as influences. Of course, I



B.J. Stead (left) and Justin Aufdemkampe.

can't live without Jimi Hendrix and guitarists like that like that, but I'm actually really influenced by reggae music—as crazy as it sounds. The reggae vibe comes with me wherever I go.

It's not that I come in on backbeats or anything, but I envision songs from a calm place. It's like looking at a painting. You need to step back and really observe the canvas so you can understand it and enjoy it. It's the same with songs. I step back, calm myself down—even if the song is as aggressive as it can be—and give myself time to absorb the music with a heightened clarity. Having that Zen-reggae-serenity helps me a lot.

Miss May I

BY JOYCE KUO

B.J. STEAD AND JUSTIN AUFDEMKAMPE were still in high school when they signed their first record deal in 2008. Since then, their metalcore band, Miss May I, has been spent touring, recording six studio albums, and working with heavy-hitter producers such as Joey Sturgis (Asking Alexandria, the Devil Wears Prada) and Machine (Lamb of God). Now a long way from the early days

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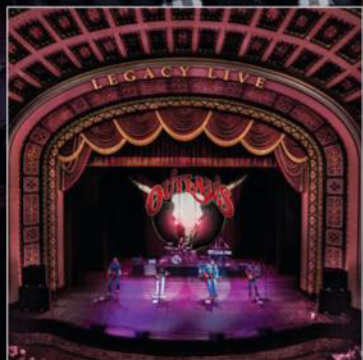
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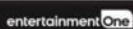
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FEATURES

>>> METAL SPECIAL

of jamming in drummer Jerod Boyd's living room, Miss May I just released *Deathless* [Rise].

What are your strengths and weaknesses as guitarists?

Stead: I've never been a super shredder like Jason Richardson or John Petrucci. The way I aspire to play lead is more like David Gilmour. He's not the most technical player, but he always plays the right notes at the right time.

Aufdemkampe: I'm a very rhythmic player with a good right hand, but my weakness is dexterity. My left hand isn't as strong as my right. To this day, before we play a show, I have to warm up to get everything loose. I usually alternate-pick through some arpeggios. I learned fast that if I don't, during the first three songs of our set, my fingers won't move the way I need them to.

For the *Deathless* sessions, did you have a mainstay setup?

Aufdemkampe: I have a custom Charvel,

and B.J. plays Ibanez RG Series guitars loaded with EMG pickups. We both use GHS Boomers. We also moved over to Kemper Profilers—which allowed us to monitor with some good hi-gain tones, but not commit to anything until we mixed. Then, we'd take the dry, direct signal, and use it to re-amp parts as desired. This is badass, because when you're recording, you're more focused on your playing than your tone. But when the tracks are down, we can go back and focus 100 percent on the sounds.

What's your songwriting process like?

Stead: We both have a mobile studio setup. If you want to put out content, being proficient with the recording process is very important for modern guitar players. I come up with a working title—like “Mammoth” or “Dragon”—and I try to write something around that theme. Also, I always try to start off songwriting sessions with a set intro part that helps the song evolve. Developing good



Once Human's Logan Mader.



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arrangements is really important. Our first album, *Apologies Are For the Weak*, was just a mess of riff soup—riff one, riff two, riff three, chorus, riff four, and so on. We were guilty of not paying attention to how a song should unfold. Now, we take an approach that's based on the conventional science of song structure. People have been doing it that way for decades, and it works for a reason.

Was it tough being a band with a record deal when you were all so young?

Aufdemkampe: A bit. Being in a band is awesome, but it also can be extremely stressful. When that stress gets thrown into a room with five people, it can get intense. I had my phase when I would get pissed off and just leave the studio. Now, we're starting to grow up and realize that arguing stalls progress.

Stead: On the other hand, I think the best music comes from the people with the biggest passions.

Once Human

BY JOYCE KUO

ONCE HUMAN'S LOGAN MADER WAS the original lead guitarist of the popular Oakland-based groove-metal outfit Machine Head. After working briefly with Soulfly in 1998, he developed a passion for studio work, and began producing, engineering, and mixing bands such as Gojira, Fear Factory, Five Finger Death Punch, and others. With a full-time career in the recording studio, Mader took a 12-year hiatus from guitar performance until the 2015 inception of his melodic death-metal band, Once Human. The band's sophomore album, *Evolution* [earMusic], features Logan accompanied by co-guitarists Skyler Howren and Max Karon.

How do you juggle being behind the

scenes as a producer, and also being an artist and guitar player?

Actually, I had to reconnect with the guitar, because when I was producing full-time, I lost my passion for playing guitar for fun. Now with Once Human, I've really got my legs back, and I've pushed myself to become a better player and riff writer. I'm doing this balance between producer guy and musician guy now, and it feels good. It feels complete.

How do you approach your guitar parts?

I'm a self-taught player. I never studied music theory or took lessons. I don't know what I'm doing, but I just hear it and feel it. This is critical, because I've scored a couple of movies and video games completely by feel, and I pulled it off. I've often had to go outside the box of normal songwriting, but I really enjoy doing those sorts of things, because they expand my horizons musically.

Who were your early influences, and who are your current favorites?

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Going way back to my childhood, I would say Dimebag. Metallica is a very nostalgic influence, as is Slayer and all the bands in the San Francisco Bay Area's late '80s/early '90s thrash-metal scene. As far as the current metal scene, I try to listen to everything that comes out at least once. I think the guys in Periphery are amazing guitar players, but my new favorite guitarist is Max Karon—who joined Once Human. I met him while on tour last year. He was a tech and a monitor engineer, and, one day, I listened to some of the music he was writing. I was like, "What are you doing? You need to be playing!" So he started working with [Once Human vocalist] Lauren Hart and I on *Evolution*. He's just amazing. His musical mind is pretty out there, but he always plays and writes with a lot of feeling.

What's your present rig like?

I'm not super picky when it comes to guitars, but I prefer mahogany bodies,

EMG 81 pickups, and a nice low action. I recently moved over to Ibanez, and I'm really happy with them. I started playing a 7-string with a really cool tuning—[*low to high*] G, C, G, C, F, A, D—on the new album. I also switched to a Kemper Profiler, and I love it. I've even created some of my own profiles. The fact you can so accurately capture the sound of any amp is amazing. For touring, it pretty much fits in a carry-on bag, and it's my whole backline. I don't use speaker cabinets anymore—just in-ears and stage monitors.

What are your thoughts on the state of guitar these days?

I can't imagine the world not being excited about guitar. Look at the state of the industry today versus 15 years ago. There are so many amazing players. This shows me that the guitar is alive and well, and that it still speaks to young people as it always has.

Wolf Hoffmann

BY MICHAEL MOLEND

WOLF HOFFMAN'S JOURNEY THROUGH *Headbangers Symphony* [Nuclear Blast]—his homage to classical themes, melodies, and composers—was an eight-year labor of love involving his home studio, pro studios, samples and sound libraries, and, eventually, a session with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra. And, as technology lurched forward during his record's near decade-long gestation, the Accept guitarist found himself in a constant cycle of improving, refining, and replacing sounds.

Eight years is a long birth cycle for an album...

After Accept reunited around seven years ago, the band became priority number

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one, and my project sat on the sidelines. If I ever do anything like this again, however, I'll try to do it in one go [laughs].

Headbangers Symphony is a striking hybrid of classical music, metal, and shred guitar. How did you approach the arrangements?

I was pretty ruthless. I never planned to do the original pieces any justice. I didn't look at a Beethoven symphony, and say, "I've got to put all the great parts of this symphony in my piece." I just went, "I like this little bit. I'll steal that, I'll write a riff or two around it, put in a solo, and return to the main theme." I really just stole the parts that were interesting to me, and asked myself, "What else would I do with this piece if it was my original idea?" I looked at it as if it were an instrumental work of my own.

Did you write out the parts for the orchestra?

No, I didn't. Thankfully, I had a partner, Melo Mafali, who is a classically trained



Wolf Hoffmann

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pianist, arranger, and composer. He has a passion for rock music and metal, and I have a passion for classical music, so the two of us were like yin and yang. I'd hear something in my head, and play or sing it to him, and he'd work it out on a keyboard. Then, I'd go, "No, a little more this, or a little less that." He could translate what we wanted—or how

I felt about something—and put it on paper.

What was your go-to gear throughout the album's eight years of sessions?

I have a signature Framus V that I use extensively for basic metal tones and shredding. I also have a '62 Fender Strat, which has a nice mellow tone, and a PRS Singlecut with a mahogany body that's a little too mellow for

me, but I use it here and there. Then, there's a 12-string Ovation and a Martin D-28 for acoustic stuff. I've been using Kemper Profilers for four years exclusively—although some of the guitar parts on the album are actually from demo takes that I did years ago using a Wizard amp. I've been a Marshall player all my life, and, in addition to some hot-rodded models, I have a '70s JMP that doesn't distort very much, but it has a beautiful chime. All of these amps and tones were profiled into the Kemper, and that's what you hear on the album. You know, when I first got this thing, I thought there was no way it would sound like the real thing. But it totally feels and plays like my favorite amps. If I can't hear a difference, then it's good enough for me.

Was it challenging jumping between conventional songs with Accept and the instrumental work for own project?

No. I enjoyed doing both. But the good thing about instrumental music is that it's all wide open. You can do whatever you want. That said, it's not easy to fill five minutes of instrumental music without things getting repetitious and boring.

How do you pump up an instrumental piece after your internal judge tells you it may be getting too repetitious?

I just have to be my own worst critic, and ask, "Does it bore me?" If it does, it's going to bore other people, as well. Usually, I record a bunch of stuff and listen back the next morning, and say, "What was I thinking? Let's do this again [laughs]." To keep things interesting, I might start with a cleaner tone, playing very gently, and the next go around, I'll change the sound slightly and put more aggressiveness into it. Towards the end it may be all out warfare. I'm a strong believer in that it's not only what you play, but how you play it. All those little nuances can make a world of difference when you're building a song.

How do you craft your solos?

It depends on what it is. If I'm shredding, I'll just go for it and do 20 takes to see what I come up with. But if it's a moody piece where noodling isn't the right approach, I actually think about every note that I play. I'll sing the lines in my head first, and then try to play the part with my fingers. I don't think about keys or modes or any of that stuff. I'm really more of a gut player. I find that if you're not really sure of what you're doing, and you're just feeling out a song, there's something magic about that. ■



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Carrying On

FOUNDING GUITARIST RICHARD WILLIAMS AND KANSAS RELEASE THEIR FIRST NEW STUDIO ALBUM IN 16 YEARS

BY VINNIE DEMASI

“NOTHING LASTS FOREVER BUT THE EARTH and sky,” proclaim the lyrics to Kansas’ iconic anthem “Dust in the Wind.” That assertion may be debatable from a geological standpoint, but there’s no question that Kansas itself is trying to last as long as mortally possible. Since the release of its debut album on Don Kirshner’s label in 1974, the band has continued—with one break from 1984-1985—to deliver its eclectic and fastidiously crafted patchwork of hard rock, prog, bluegrass, folk, classical, and boogie-woogie. Onstage, this melting pot of musical influences was often brought to life by multi-instrumentalists who covered electric and acoustic guitars, keyboards, piano, organ, lead vocals, violin, viola, drums, bass, percussion, and xylophone—sometimes all in the same song!

And yet, despite its eclecticism and penchant for long-form, multi-part songs, Kansas scored three rock-radio classics in the mid ’70s with “Dust in the Wind,” “Carry On Wayward Son,” and “Point of Know Return.” These, alongside fan favorites such as “Magnum Opus,” “Song for America,” and “Death of Mother Nature Suite,” helped the band sell millions of records and pack arenas across America. The ’80s and ’90s saw a move towards more streamlined, radio-friendly sounds, as well as various personnel changes that once included guitarist Steve Morse.

The current Kansas lineup is anchored by founding members Richard Williams on guitar and Phil Ehart on drums. They are joined by guitarist Zak Rizvi, bassist Billy Greer, violinist David Ragsdale, keyboardist David Manion, and Ronnie Platt on lead vocals and keyboards.



Kansas in full prog-rock fury. Williams is at far left.

Here, Williams provides some insights into Kansas' creative engines, as well as how the group's latest release, *The Prelude Implicit* [Inside Out Music]—its first album of new material in 16 years—charges at the listener with the same “we’ve got something to prove” urgency as its debut album did more than 40 years ago.

***The Prelude Implicit* sounds like the classic Kansas albums of the '70s, despite the fact that the band's two original main songwriters Kerry Livgren and Steve Walsh are no longer members. Did you deliberately attempt to revisit your earlier style?**

Yes. The goal was to create a quintessential Kansas album, and I feel we've accomplished that in every aspect—from the sound, to the lyrics, to the cover art. Phil and I have been here since the

beginning, and Billy and Dave have been onboard a really long time, so we all have a pretty good grip on what “quintessential Kansas” is.

Why so long between studio albums?

We did the album *Somewhere to Elsewhere* with Kerry and the original lineup 16 years ago, because he had a bunch of songs lying around. It was a lot of fun, but it really wasn't like a band vibe. It was essentially me, Phil, and Kerry in a studio recording in an assembly line process. Steve's parts were essentially flown in, because he was off making a solo record. We continued touring, but Steve and Kerry weren't really in a place where they felt like they wanted to make new Kansas music, so we didn't. After Steve retired in 2014, it left the door open for a new team to come

in and create, and, as a result, this is truly a record by a *band*. While we were making it, we were all together in the studio at all times.

So you contributed to the songwriting and arranging more than on previous releases?

Yes. Sometimes, my contribution would be knowing what *not* to do. I knew when an

idea wasn't working, or if it just wasn't us, and I would lobby for something different

***The Prelude Implicit's* opening track, "With This Heart," has a 12/8 feel, but with an added beat in some parts to make it 13/8. One of Kansas' earliest songs, "Lonely Street," was a 12/8 blues shuffle, but with a dropped beat to make it 11/8. How did**

you begin experimenting with odd-meters in your music?

I was in a high-school band with Phil Ehart, and we played a bunch of Top 40 stuff, so we got that out of our systems fairly early. We started to connect with people who wanted to do their own thing, and we began restructuring the covers in our repertoire by adding intros and middle sections and messing with the arrangements. We would play the songs in ways that were more palatable to our taste, because we were influenced by progressive bands like King Crimson and Soft Machine. We related to the fact that they were writing their own rule book. In hindsight, I guess you can say we were learning to be us, so when we started to write our own material, we stretched the boundaries harmonically, rhythmically, lyrically, and compositionally. We didn't just want to write songs—we wanted to write material that was uniquely ours.

Kansas has always been known for its intricate arrangements.

Even though we were schooled on American rock and the British Invasion, we never wanted to sound like a typical rock band. We're not jazz cats, we're not groove-masters, and we're pretty heavy-handed players. Orchestration was always important to us, though, so we wound up sounding like a like a cross between the Philharmonic and Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels. Many of our songs have different sections with completely different textures. Guitar, bass, drums, and Hammond organ will be one part, and the next will be piano, violin, and xylophone. We learned that not every instrument has to be playing all the time. Sometimes, playing nothing works better than just finding a part to play. When everyone plays all the time, the music just starts to flat line and lose dynamics.

How did Zak Rizvi come to join the band?

When we first started recording, Zak was actually producing alongside Phil and me. As the album progressed, he contributed so much as a songwriter and collaborator that Phil and I realized he needed to be part of the team. We're not done being Kansas yet. We're thinking of the next record, and the next record after that, and Zak was really on board with our vision.

How did your style of playing guitar meld with Zak's?

Well, I had already doubled a lot of my parts on the record, but we decided to go

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back and have Zak re-record my doubles. The difference in sound of having two guitarists play the same part is amazing, because he'll articulate things slightly different than me, or add a different vibrato. I think it sounds so much more interesting and alive than having me just replay the parts by myself.

What was your rig for recording the album?

My setup is pretty simple. I use a Fractal Audio Axe-FX. It's such a monster in the studio, because you're recording parts in minutes instead of spending hours miking different amps. At the beginning of the sessions, I did some tracks with an amp, but after a side-by-side comparison with the Fractal, there

was no contest. It's also great for live shows, because we do a lot of fly dates where I can't lug a whole rig around with me.

For guitars, I used a PRS Custom 24 and a PRS McCarty with Lollar pickups. I also used a Telecaster in spots to bring clarity to some of the low-note passages. My main acoustic is a Martin D-28 modeled after the original I played on "Dust in the Wind"—which is now in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Martin loaned me a special model they made to commemorate the song's 35th anniversary, which I played onstage before it was auctioned. After I gave it back, I called Martin and said, "I've got to have another one!"

Speaking of "Dust in the Wind," was the acoustic part doubled with a second guitar in Nashville Tuning [E,A,D,G,B,E, low to high, with the four lowest strings replaced by thinner strings, and tuned an octave higher than standard pitch]?

Yes. It's a subtle but effective technique—especially for fingerpicked parts, because you'll get these high notes popping out in unusual places. Terry Becker, one of the engineers on *Point of Know Return*, came up with the idea. I'd never heard of it until she suggested it. It's a technique I still use, but now I have a Taylor with a shorter scale, so I don't break so many G strings tuning it up an octave.

What was it like working with Steve Morse as a co-guitarist?

It was inspiring. He had just been voted "Best Overall Guitarist" for the fifth time, and he was enshrined in *Guitar Player's* Gallery of the Greats. And he was sitting across from me in Phil's basement writing new material. It was really amazing to watch him come up with parts on the fly by playing a bass line with his thumb, triads with his middle fingers, and a melody with his pinky. I never felt intimidated by his genius, though, because Steve is just not an intimidating guy. As a result, he understood that while he could play in many ways I couldn't, I could also play in ways he couldn't. Our relationship was very complementary.

The great thing about Steve is that he is always listening and learning. Once we were watching a cover band that wasn't particularly good. Some musicians would've laughed, but Steve homed in on this particular thing the guitarist was doing with his toggle switch to get a weird sound, and he said, "Look at that. I've never seen anybody do that before." Instead of being critical, he was listening with an open mind. ■

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Weird Scenes Inside the GP Archives

WHEN YOUR MAGAZINE WAS BORN IN 1967, AND published content in the wacky '70s, shreddy '80s, and beyond, there's bound to be some, um, *interesting* articles

hiding out in the archives. So for GP's 50th anniversary year, the staff is going to seek out and republish some of our wilder and weirder stories for your amusement



PRO'S WIVES

Guitar Player was curious as to what life is like as a professional guitarist's wife. We went right to the best sources and interviewed Mrs. Laurindo Almeida, Mrs. Joe Pass, Mrs. Howard Roberts, Mrs. Johnny Smith and Mrs. George Van Eps. All of the Mrs. agree that their husbands are where they are today because of dedication and hard work.

Natalie Almeida has been married to Laurindo for 25 years. They lead a normal life although she states that "Guitar is a very demanding instrument which requires a great deal of time. We manage to do what we want (almost)!"

Though Natalie does not play guitar, she feels that she has aided Laurindo's career because "I put him to exercise and practice the instrument. Laurindo practices between two and five hours a day, and often does scales while watching television cartoons."

Natalie's hobbies are house-cleaning and photography, and other than her husband her favorite guitarists are Howard Roberts and Andres Segovia. "Laurindo's hobbies are guitar, swimming, guitar, guitar, guitar, guitar."

Natalie tours with Laurindo and despite his busy schedule, they are able to be together alone on weekends.



Jo Van Eps has been married to George for 33 years. They have three children who play piano and flute. Though they lead a normal life, "... most of our social life is restricted by my husband's career."

Jo doesn't play guitar but feels that she has aided George's career because: "My husband says I have helped him with encouragement, patience, and taking over all of the little details."

George practices four hours a day and enjoys swimming and fishing along with boating. The Van Eps do not have, "... very much private time together," although they entertain guitarists Vince Terri, Bob Gibbons, Tony Rizzi, Keith Jarrel, John Crawford, and Jim Dellel at their home.

Joe enjoys guitarists Lenny Breau, Howard Roberts, Vince Terri, and Herb Ellis, and states that: "Life as a professional guitarist's wife is no different than that of any other profession."

and enjoyment. We're kicking off the series with this intriguing morsel right out of the *Mad Men* era—a December 1969 profile of the women behind the guitar stars. —MICHAEL MOLEND



Mrs. Howard Roberts claims that: "We lead a normal life, normal in that we have three children and they lead a normal life." Married to Howard for twelve years, Jill has been playing guitar for seven years. "I studied classical for two years, then started taking lessons from Howard. The lessons were very hard and very sophisticated. The better I get, the more patient Howard gets."

Jill has been teaching guitar for six months, and has twenty students. She feels that being Howard Roberts' wife has a "definite" influence on her students. Their seven-year-old son plays organ, "...because he wanted a different instrument than Daddy's. Now he's interested in the guitar. He wants to play in a group with Daddy. He figures that I will play drums, Daddy will play guitar, and he will play organ."

Jill feels that she hasn't aided Howard's career, in that "...he is the decision-maker. In all aspects of his career he is the boss." Jill doesn't give any favorite guitarists because, "I might leave some out, and so many are my friends." Her greatest hobby is painting, which she has pursued in many different media. She has studied with Pat Hendrickson (wife of guitarist Al Hendrickson), who has been made a Dame in England for her paintings. Howard's hobbies are riding a motorcycle, and hunting. "He doesn't hunt as much as he would like, but that's one of his pleasures."

The Roberts lead a busy life, with daily routines such as eating and sleeping altered by Howard's career. "We have quite a few friends who are musicians. We don't party a lot, but we do get around. We work out the problem of being alone. Sometimes I have to make an appointment with him."

Alison Pass has been married to Joe for 6 years. Though she does not play guitar she keeps busy by "cooking, sewing, and gardening." Her favorite guitarists are Wes Montgomery, Thumbs Carlisle, and Chet Atkins. She and Joe often entertain guitarists Bill Thraser, Ron Anthony, Joe Puma, John Pisano, and have entertained the late Wes Montgomery.

Joe practices in spurts, "some days none and others six hours." His hobbies are reading, eating, and "monkeying around." Joe's schedule keeps him busy but Mr. and Mrs. Pass still find time to be together alone.



Sandy Smith has been married to Johnny for nine and a half years. Sandy had never heard of Johnny before she met him one night at "Eddie's" in Colorado Springs. "I had my back turned to Johnny. He started playing and something happened; I said I'm going to marry that man playing the guitar. I turned and looked at him and said Yes! I will marry that man. I met him that night and we danced. He looked down at me and said 'Will you marry me?' Two years later we got married."

Johnny doesn't require absolute silence when he practices, though Sandy said: "He does most of his practicing in his head. He concentrates and hears nothing." Sandy's hobbies are knitting, fishing, and boating, and she also works full-time at Johnny's music store in Colorado Springs. She feels that their social life is not restricted by Johnny's career, and that they do more entertaining than the average person. "I'll go home and start cooking dinner and all of a sudden Johnny will phone and say we have company coming, or we have to get out and off we go. It is an exciting life."

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SUICIDE SILENCE'S UPCOMING ALBUM

BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA
PHOTOGRAPHS BY HRISTO SHINDOV





Since forming
in Riverside,
California, in
2002, Suicide

Silence has followed its own path to metal eminence. The band members—guitarists Chris Garza and Mark Heylman, bassist Dan Kenny, drummer Alex Lopez, and vocalist Eddie Herida—inhabit the death-core cosmos, but while they share the screamed vocals, complex time signatures, chunky and stuttered rhythms, and

COVER STORY

SUICIDE SILENCE



Chris Garza (left) and Mark Heylmun.

choreographed head banging of their peers, they've also channeled tragedy, hard work, and their musical heroes to carve out a singular identity.

In addition, Suicide Silence has managed to find success in the old-school record industry and the new media. Several of their YouTube videos have hit tens of millions of views, and they currently have 4.1 million Facebook fans, as well as 614,000 Twitter followers and 394,000 Instagram followers.

But, combined with its popularity in the online galaxy, the group has managed to do something that has been brutally difficult for musicians of late—sell records.

Starting with *The Cleansing* in 2007—which cracked the *Billboard* Top 100 and became one of the best-selling debut albums in the Century Media label's history—Suicide Silence has continued to zoom up the charts and move massive amounts of CDs and downloads. They even won “Best New

Talent” in the 2009 Golden God Awards held by GP's sister publication, *Revolver*.

Unfortunately, the journey has not been without heartbreak. On November 1, 2012, founding vocalist Mitch Luckner was killed in a motorcycle accident. It took about a year for the band to regroup with former All Shall Perish singer Hermida stepping into the role of new vocalist.

In 2016, recording commenced on an album project produced by Ross Robinson,

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who had discovered Korn and Slipknot, as well as other successful metal acts. This meant the band was in the hands of a producer who had made some of the very records that had influenced their own music, and, in Garza's case, at least, actually kick-started his desire to become a guitarist. The self-titled album is scheduled for release in February 2017, but an early listen revealed that the sonic vistas of the new music are diverse and wonderfully strange. Guitars undulate in trippy delays, stab the frequency spectrum with fuzzed-out madness, shimmer with phased jangles, swirl in tsunamis of distortion, and, ultimately, conspire to totally and completely kick ass.

What kind of rigs did you guys pull out while recording the new album?

Heylmun: My main guitar is my custom, 7-string ESP V with an alder body, a 26" scale, and a camouflage finish. I had a 6-string ESP SV-II at home that I jammed on a lot, and

when I had to make a decision on my custom model, I asked the factory, "Can you make me a SV-II in cammo with an extra inch?" I feel the longer scale really handles the tuning better. It was basically taking one of the guitars ESP already made, and then making it a 7-string, giving it a different camouflage finish, adding the longer scale, and putting a Floyd Rose on it. I designed it for what I call the "isms" of my playing. I'm all about scrapes, pinch harmonics, and anything I can do to surprise people, and the whammy bar adds to all of those little off-the-cuff things I like to do. Since I started using the Floyd again, I went with lighter gauges—a .062 on top of a standard set of .010s. I feel the Floyd works best with lighter strings. I try to have more restraint, even though I'm playing this crazy wild aggressive music. But it's a good test for my playing—like, can I actually pull back and play dynamically?

The main tone on the album is from my Mesa/Boogie Mark V—which is a million-trick

pony—but I also used an original 5150 amp to get a harsher sound with more bite on some solos. We'd also throw in a bunch of distortion pedals and overdrives to find something crazy, bright, and out of control—like on "Conformity." Before I start playing the lead, there's this squeak that's super overdriven. In addition, a vintage Memory Lane delay from the '70s was integral to a lot of the tones. It's one of Ross' pedals. It's huge, it has one knob, and I don't even know how to describe what does. Listen to the end of "Dying in a Red Room" to hear it battling itself along with a Boss Octave pedal to get this psychedelic, Mars Volta feel. That ending was actually a scratch guitar track we did while we were recording drums. It was cool, so it ended up being a part of the final product.

Garza: I'm currently using a 7-string Ibanez RGD7UC Prestige Uppercut. The top string is .066, and from B to high E is .050 to .010. I tried a whole bunch of top string



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gauges from .060 to .070, and .070 was too tight and .060 was too loose. The vibration I get from the .066 is perfect. Ross—being the badass he is—still has the Marshall head and cab he used on some of my favorite Korn and Slipknot records. My amp is a Mesa/Boogie Rectifier, but once I plugged in to that Marshall—that was the sound.

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What informs your solos and riffs? Do you have a specific influence or two flying along with you, or is it more of an amalgamation of everything you've ever heard?

Heylmun: That's a great word—amalgamation—because I can't help being a vessel for every piece of music I've ever enjoyed, or even *didn't* enjoy. Steve Vai was somebody I was listening to before I even started playing guitar, and my dad had tons of Shrapnel albums by George Lynch, Steve Lukather, and all these dark rippers. Tony Iommi and Angus Young were huge. My first guitar was a Gibson SG because of those two. I loved Pete Townshend's compositional skills. I think the Who has done everything with music that I ever want to do. Then, the super rippers like John Petrucci and Alexi Laiho. There was a big phase when I was listening to *Friday Night in San Francisco* by Al Di Meola, John McLaughlin, and Paco de Lucia. It's an insane record. I was just like, "Damn, there's so much you can do with a guitar. There's no right way, there's no wrong way, and there are so many different ways of killing it." Hearing Dimebag Darrell flipped my world upside down. I went into a 100-percent Pantera hole for two years. His playing was melodic, it had style, it was impressive, and it almost seemed impossible—so fast and so precise and so awesome. I'd ask myself, "How is he even doing that?"

I'm not specifically digging into some player's bag of tricks, though. And I don't compose solos. I take one or two days in the studio, and those are my solo days where I track all of the guitar leads. I'll record takes until I get one I like. Sometimes, it's one take and that's what it is. Other times, I'll listen and go, "Oh, I like what I did at the beginning of this one, and what I did at the end of that one." Then, I'll redo play the parts as a single solo take.

A lot of guys would just say, "I'm done. I'll comp this to that, and go have a sandwich."

Heylmun: I've done that in the past. But it doesn't feel like it's as much *me* as

I'd like it to be. Now, I avoid comping. I just like to slam it out, have fun, and be that communicator for all the music I've ever listened to.

You know, for our previous albums, I wasn't always soloing over a chord progression, whereas this record actually has progressions. I know people will read this and say, "What—you didn't have chord progressions in your previous music?" Well, no. We didn't. We were going against the grain all the time, trying to be extreme and wild and different. So a lot of the things I was soloing over were literally either one note, or a polyrhythm breakdown kind of thing. But even when I have harmony to follow, I'm absolutely not thinking about what note I'm playing, or what the chord is. I just know how I want it to feel. When I prepare for an actual take of a solo, I'll try different things, but I'm thinking about numbers and notes. I'm really thinking, "Am I getting out of this what the music deserves?" For example, on "Conformity," I played this super-long classic guitar solo, because that song is about the fact there's so much conformity all around us. The solo is a cliché. It's satirical. And it fits the song to a "T."

Chris, what about your influences?

Garza: I started listening to music when I was still in diapers. I'd watch my dad practice in our garage—which is the same garage that we *still* practice in. I knew I wanted to play music, but I had no idea what I wanted to do. Fast forward to when I'm 13. I heard Korn's "Got the Life," and that was it. "Oh sh*t. I want to play guitar. I want to do this tuning. I want to play 7-string." It wasn't until I got older that I realized how seductive Korn's A tuning was to me. It was like the frequency inside my body. It was *me*. And that's why I've never switched tunings. I stuck with A. Some bands think if they tune lower, it's going to be heavier. And what is heavier? You just play what feels heavy and it *will* be heavy—no matter how it sounds, or what tuning you're in. For me, it's when I open my heart, and play notes that I'm feeling, as opposed to playing something that *sounds* heavy just because it's low or thick or overdriven. If the emotion isn't there, the riff will mean nothing to you, and nothing to the people who hear it. But if you can tap into your emotions and play what you're truly feeling—anger or sadness or whatever—that riff will hit *hard*.



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What kinds of things did Ross bring to the party to inspire, challenge, and guide you during the sessions?

Garza: When the drums were done, he would have Mark and I play our rhythm tracks together. He wanted the tracks to have a real intense live feel, so he'd have us jamming and rocking out right next to each other in the control room. We'd lay down a foundation of fire, and then go back and put some more gasoline on the fire until the whole world is on fire [laughs]. During the "more gasoline" part—where we laid down overdubs with all these crazy riffs and things—if Ross felt something was needed to bring out the intensity or interest, he'd get down and fool around with the knobs on the effects pedals while we were playing our parts. He knows how to nail the emotions you're feeling and amplify them through your playing. It was weird, but given that Ross' records saved my life in a way, I trusted him with all my being. His ideas are so crazy and unorthodox that

you don't have time to process whether you like what he's doing or not. I mean, I would get so confused at times with what was happening, but he forced me to dive into my subconscious and play from my heart. And, by doing that, I started playing like I had been trying to play since I was 13. He opened me up to find my true style, and I guess that's only possible through pure love and confusion.

Heylmun: There was a lot of tripped-out stuff that happened when we were playing together [laughs].

Garza: I remember seeing these super short clips of Slipknot tracking their first record, and Mick [Thomson, guitarist] is playing on "Surfacing," and he's f**king going ape sh*t. He's rocking out like it's a full on show. At the time—and for so many years afterwards—I thought, "They must have been joking for the camera or something. They couldn't have been making a record in the studio and playing like wild men." So when we were making this record, I finally had the opportunity to

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ask, "Hey Ross, was Mick tracking in that video?" He's like, "Yep." And then it clicked—I want to do that, too. I want to play with that kind of intensity and abandon while recording. I want the record to sound *live*!

What kinds of things do you feel make Suicide Silence unique amongst its metal peers?

Heylmun: My dad taught me how to play guitar, and he's like a frickin' savant about music theory. I had already taken band by then, so everything else I learned about music was from sheet music and brass instruments. But the application of that knowledge wasn't helping me write music, and it wasn't helpful in my early bands, either. I wasn't surrounded by people who knew music theory. And, in reality, I tried to fit into *their* mold. With Suicide Silence, for example, I was more enthused to learn what they were doing. And my dad told me that if I didn't want to apply theory to my guitar playing, then I should just play what feels good. He said I

didn't have to stick with what is "correct," or always think inside of a musical box. I feel that my constant search to work outside of that "box" helps me contribute to what makes this band so special.

Garza: Some bands are afraid to be themselves, and that results in records that suck, and the band has no idea why. You have to face your feelings and your pain to make great records, and that's f**king terrifying, but if you can do it, your songs will communicate truth. It really opened my eyes when our singer Mitch Lucker passed away. I was the only member of the band at the hospital, and it happened in front of me, so it feels like a movie to this day. In that moment, I got clarity and purpose. I talked to the band and asked, "What if this was our last record? We did we want to leave behind? What do we really want to do?" And we all went into our musical future as if it were life or death. No rules. No fear. If you're afraid, that's fake metal. *Fearlessness* is true metal. ■

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LESSONS

Metallurgy 101 How to Create Heavy Metal Riffs

BY JESSE GRESS

BEHIND EVERY GREAT HEAVY METAL song there's a great guitar riff or rhythm figure. Whether you're cranking old-school Cream-Zep-Purple-Sabbath tones through vintage plexi Marshalls, or pumping out ultra-hi-gain, rectified, scooped-mid Metallica-style mayhem, it's usually the riff that is memorable, not the solo. With that in mind, this metal rhythm guitar primer was designed to provide some cool tools, tips, and tricks you can use to forge your own fiery riffs.

As with any stylistic analysis, we begin by examining recurring patterns, motifs, techniques, etc., and then organize them into a method of sorts. The elemental table of metal music includes power chords built from perfect fourth and fifth intervals, muscular single-note and partial chord riffs, galloping and stuttering rhythms, and yes,

even tender moments framed by gently arpeggiated chordal figures.

And consider this: If rock and roll was birthed from the blues, then heavy metal is the offspring of both. How so?

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

Scores of well-known metal riffs have their origins in the blues scale, partially because its root- $\flat$ 3-4- $\flat$ 5-5- $\flat$ 7 formula lends itself well to parallel (i.e. equally spaced) harmonies, especially fourth and fifth intervals, the main ingredients in power chords. **Ex. 1a** shows an A blues scale (A, C, D, E $\flat$, E, and G) harmonized in parallel fifths. Think of it as an A blues power-chord scale, and try out a few of your own stock blues licks in fifths.

Inverting these fifths, by moving the bottom note up one octave, transforms Ex. 1a's power chords into **Ex. 1b**'s easy-to-play,

one-finger, double-stopped parallel fourths, while **Ex. 1c** offers a descending, octave-lower version of the same chord scale. Get to know them.

LICK IN A BOX

Planting your fret hand in fifth position (index finger at the fifth fret) allows easy access to "boxed" patterns of fourths on the bottom four strings, such as those illustrated in **Examples 2a-d**. Familiarize yourself with each pattern and devise a few of your own. Each five-note pattern can also be reordered to produce a whopping 120 permutations (1 x 2 x 3 x 4 x 5)—24, starting on each fourth. Additionally, all of these except Ex. 2d can be inverted to fifths, by dropping the top note down one octave. And yes, all of the above works in all keys. This gives us plenty of raw materials to work with. The only thing missing is rhythm.

Fig. 1a

Fifths

A5 C5 D5 E $\flat$ 5 E5 G5 A5

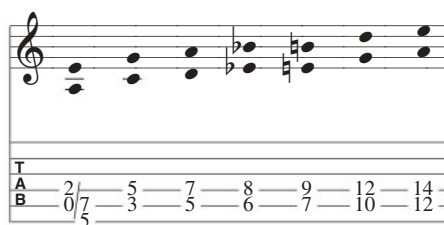


Fig. 1b

Ascending Fourths

A5 C5 D5 E $\flat$ 5 E5 G5 A5

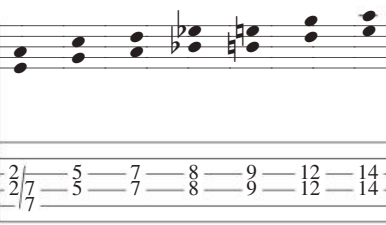


Fig. 1c

Descending Fourths

A5 G5 E5 E $\flat$ 5 D5 C5 A5



Fig. 2a

A5 C5 D5 C5 A5

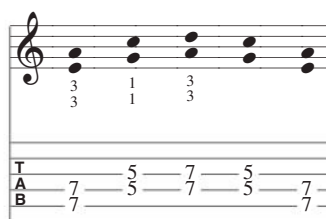


Fig. 2b

A5 G5 A5 C5 A5

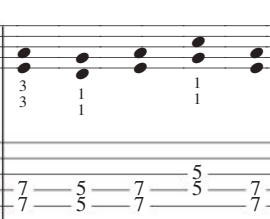


Fig. 2c

E $\flat$ 5 D5 C5 G5 A5

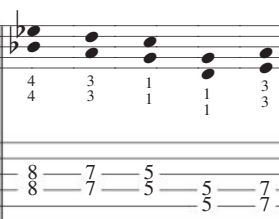


Fig. 2d

E5 E $\flat$ 5 D5 A5 G5



DIS PLACE ROCKS!

Rhythmically speaking, there's no cooler tool than displacement, a compositional/improvisational technique whereby a motif is repeated verbatim, but starting on a different part of the measure. To illustrate, **Ex. 3a** applies the first three chords from Examples 1b and 2a (*A5-C5-D5*) to a simple eighth-eighth-dotted-half-note rhythmic motif and then reverses their order (*D5-C5-A5*) to create a two-bar

“call-and-response” riff. The rhythmic displacement begins in **Ex. 3b**, where the same riff is played starting one eighth-note later, on the “and” of beat one. (Think Jeff Beck’s “Plynth.”) Using the same strategy, we can continue the eighth-note displacements by starting the same riff on beat two (**Ex. 3c**), the “and” of two (**Ex. 3d**), beat three (**Ex. 3e**), the “and” of three (**Ex. 3f**), beat four (**Ex. 3g**), and the “and” of four (**Ex. 3d**), after which we

come full circle back to starting on beat one.

Now try playing all of the previous displacements with added open *A* notes on every unused eighth note. **Examples 4a** and **4b** will get you on track. For additional mileage, apply the substitute rhythms notated in the footnote to the displaced riffs. You can also mix and match measures from different rhythms and displacements for even more variations.

Fig. 3a

♩ = 100-136

A5 C5 D5 C5 A5

3 1 3

7-5-7 7-5-7 7-5-7 7-5-7 7-5-7 7-5-7

Fig. 3b

[illegible]

Fig. 3f

Fig. 3g

Fig. 3h

Fig. 3h

Fig. 4a

♩ = 100-136 *A5 C5 D5 C5 A5

let ring let ring l.r. l.r.

TAB: 7 5 7 0 0 0 0 0 7 5 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 7 5 7 0 0 0 0 0 7 5 2 0 0 0 0 0

*Rhythmic substitutions:

Fig. 4b

4/4

let ring

let ring

I.r.

I.r.

TAB

7 5 7 2 0 0 0 0

7 5 2 0 0 0 0 0

0 7 5 7 0 0 0 0

0 7 5 2 0 0 0 0

Examples 5a and **5b** feature a four-note, A5-C5-E♭5-D5 motif that's ripe for all of the previous treatments. Try sliding from E♭5 to D5 (bar 1) and D5 to E♭5 (bar 2), or applying a half-step bend and release to the E♭5. Create your own displaceable groupings of fourths, based on those in Examples 2a-d, and rock out!

DECONSTRUCTION ZONE

Another route to riffage involves taking an

existing riff and deconstructing it and reorganizing its elements, or even by playing it backwards. **Ex. 6** utilizes the fourths from Ex. 5a, transposed down a whole step (G5-B♭5-D♭5-C5) to reimagine a classic proto-metal riff that's sort of recognizable. And how about **Ex. 7**'s similar take on a well-known 60's power-trio figure? Sounds vaguely familiar, but different, right? **Ex. 8** mines Ex. 1a's parallel fifths (transposed to D and embellished

with a slippery E5 II-chord) to revise an iron-clad metal staple that recalls a gloomy Sunday. Deconstruction also works with any single-note riff, such as the Bach-influenced, F# Aeolian minor mash-up shown in **Ex. 9**. (Can you decipher it?) Now get to work and play each example backwards!

THE GALLOP POLL

Other groovy metal weapons of mass distortion

Fig. 5a

♩ = 100-136

A5 C5 E♭5 D5 D5 E♭5 C5 A5

Fig. 5b

Fig. 6

♩ = ca. 112

B♭5 G5 B♭5 D♭5 C5 G5 B♭5 C5 G5 B♭5 C5 B♭5

Fig. 7

♩ = ca. 115

F5 D5 A5 A♭5 G5 D5 C5 D5

Fig. 8

♩ = 73

C5 D5 C5 D5 A5 C5 F5 E5 F5 E5 F5 C5

Fig. 9

♩ = ca. 134

(F#m) N.C.

are the genre's relentless galloping rhythms, which are derived from 16th-note and triplet divisions of each beat and typically relegated to the low open low-E string. (Tip: Repeat each of the following 2/4-meter examples to form bars of 4/4.) Take your pick, from every 16th-note (**Ex. 10a**), eighth-plus-two-16ths (**Ex. 10b**), two-16ths-plus-eighth (**Ex. 10c**), and 16th-eighth-16th (**Ex. 10d**), before mixing them up as shown in **Examples 10e** and **10f** (think Zep's "Immigrant Song"), and exploiting the Metallica-flavored snare-drum triplet rhythms in **Examples 10g** and **10h**. It's a chops-building, alternate picking fest that will also cement your familiarity with the way beat divisions look and

sound. Pick-hand palm muting is a must, as are accented downbeats. Already been there and done that? Try transposing these examples to the open A string, and incorporating them into displaced riffs, as suggested in Examples 4a and 4b. Better yet, add octaves, ♭7s, or other E blues scale tones on the "twos and fours," and take it from there.

ARTFUL ARPEGGIATIONS

Finally, when it's time to tenderize a metal ballad or introspective half-time section of an up-tempo song, clean-toned arpeggios are the way to go. These can take the form of the Am-G-Em-Dm/F filigrees illustrated in **Ex. 11**, or the sparse, complementary, two-guitar

chordal reductions of the Im-♭VIImaj7 (*Bm-Gmaj7*) progression that frames **Examples 12a** and **12b**. And that's just scratching the surface. Process all this information and run with it... it's all you'll need to create mountains of metal mayhem. 🎸

MORE ONLINE!



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Fig. 10a

♩ = 100-136

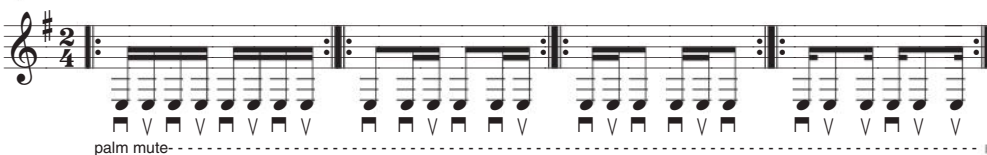


Fig. 10b

Fig. 10c

Fig. 10d

Fig. 10e

Fig. 10f

Fig. 10g

Fig. 10h

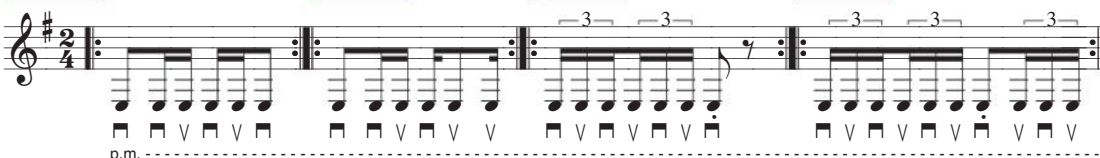


Fig. 11

♩ = ca. 100



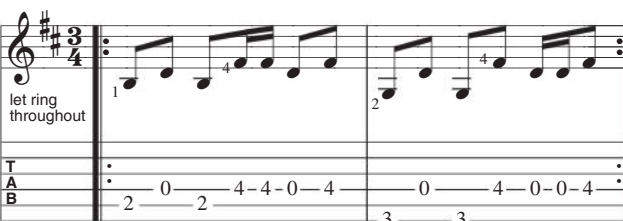
Fig. 12a

♩ = ca. 108
Gtr. 1



Fig. 12b

♩ = ca. 108
Gtr. 2



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- Quick Licks: Gary Moore
- Quick Licks: Jeff Beck
- Quick Licks: Jimmy Page
- Quick Licks: Kirk Hammett
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- Quick Licks: Paul Gilbert
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- Quick Licks: Rockabilly (Brian Setzer)
- Quick Licks: Slow Blues (Jimi Hendrix)
- Quick Licks: Steve Lukather
- Quick Licks: Albert Lee
- The Modes: Aeolian
- The Modes: Dorian
- The Modes: Ionian
- The Modes: Locrian
- The Modes: Lydian
- The Modes: Mixolydian
- The Modes: Phrygian



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>>> ARTIST LESSON

Steve Lukather's Chromatic Fantasies

12-Tone Secrets from a Studio Rock Lead Guitar Legend

BY DAVID BREWSTER

THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF recorded music, many guitarists have created magic from the dimly lit booths of the studio, from legends like Tommy Tedesco, Jimmy Page, Larry Carlton, and Michael Landau to session master Steve Lukather, whose slick licks and smooth riffs have graced many recordings over the past several decades. Luke has *hundreds* of sessions and recording credits on his résumé, which also includes being

a founding member of the Grammy award-winning rock supergroup Toto. He has also released numerous inspired solo albums, each met with mass acclaim and celebration from his loyal fans all over the world.

There are many things you can learn from a player as talented and creative as Steve Lukather, and this lesson will focus on an area of his playing that has become a popular topic of discussion among guitarists for decades—his use of chromatic

phrasing in his licks and solos, meaning notes that are a half step, or a semitone (one fret), apart and fall “in the cracks” between the notes of identifiable scales or arpeggios.

The majority of Luke’s ideas are blues- and rock-based, but he often reaches for jazzy sounds and uses chromatic ideas to help achieve them in creative and appealing ways. To begin, play through **Examples 1a** and **1b**, which will help you get a feel

Ex. 1a

Ex. 1b

Ex. 2

for a chromatic legato lick that Steve likes to use. This phrase creates an interesting slur of chromatic notes on a single string. Perform the pull-offs using a single, fluid motion, emulating the smooth, legato phrasing of a saxophone or violin, and be sure to pull the string in toward your palm as you release it (as opposed to simply lifting the fretting finger up off the string) in order to keep the string vibrating and maintain an even volume level note to note.

Our next example will give you a chance to hear this lick in action, featuring the same type of slippery chromatic phrases heard

during Steve's "Never Walk Alone" solo, from the guitarist's acclaimed solo album *Candyman*. **Ex.2** is a slight variation on this lick and showcases the chromatic idea from Ex.1b in the second bar. The numerous passing tones in this phrase blur the key center and give it a jazzy, "outside" flavor.

Ex.3 is similar to a standout lick from the Toto classic "Rosanna," which perked up more than a few ears when it hit the FM airwaves and topped the charts in the early 1980's. This idea features some slick moves, including a few well-timed chromatic slides and plenty of jazz-flavored

melodic-harmonic extensions, including strategically targeting the 9th and 11th, as it shifts and slides along and across the fretboard in tenth position.

The next idea, **Ex.4**, reveals a Lukather-approved "fill-in-the-blanks" chromatic lick in E7, including a number of grace-note slides and busy twists until you reach the climactic whole-step bend and vibrato at the end. This example is similar to a number of licks Lukather has played in his solos. Chromatic runs like these create a flurry of fast-paced movement, helping to give a solo an exciting and unpredictable sound.

Ex. 3

F

T
A
B

11 12 10 12 10 12 9 10 13 10 11 13 9 10 13

Ex. 4

E7

T
A
B

13 14 12 15 13 14 12 15 14 15 14 12 15 12 14 12 13 15 (17) (17)

Ex.5 is another fill-in-the-blanks chromatic lick that's performed in the same key but in a different position and should help you see how to move these kinds of ideas around the neck. The phrase also features a sustained bluesy finger slide at the end, typical of what you'll hear in Lukather's improvising style.

Our next example, **Ex.6**, insightfully reveals an interesting area of Luke's mastery of chord-scale relationships. The phrase features an anticipation of the D9 chord in bar 2 by foreshadowing it a half step higher before the chord change occurs. The harmonic tension is then resolved in bar 2 via a return to the "correct" key and an ending phrase that elegantly describes a D9 sound.

Finally, **Ex.7** is similar to a slippery lick

found in the Boz Scaggs classic “Breakdown Dead Ahead,” where Lukather takes a great solo and sprinkles plenty of choice licks over the catchy shuffle groove. If it has been a while, refresh your ears by giving this track a listen, and then give the lick a test drive. Be sure to maintain the same index-ring fingering as you chromatically walk down the top strings in bar 1, and also for all of the long slides in bar 2.

Play through these licks and absorb as many ideas from them as you can. Use them as inspiration as you strive to create your own original chromatic licks and phrases. If you're interested in learning more about this approach to lead playing, continue studying and borrowing licks from Luke, and find additional input from other chromatic-minded players,

such as Larry Carlton, Robben Ford, Jeff Beck, Pat Metheny, Steve Morse, and John Petrucci. Open your mind and fingers to new sounds, movements, and ideas, and you'll open your playing and fretboard to a new world of possibilities. Good luck! (All musical examples copyright 2016 *BrewhaMusicInc.*) 🎸

Ex. 5

E7

8 9 10 7 9 8 7 10 7 9 8 7 9 7 9 8 7

T
A
B

9 7 9 8 7 9 (9)

9 7 9 8 7 9 11

Ex. 6

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Rose Tree". It features a guitar solo and a vocal melody. The guitar solo is in A7 and D9 chords, with a 3/4 time signature. The vocal melody is in 4/4 time, with lyrics "The Rose Tree" and "The Rose Tree".

Guitar Solo:

- Chords:** A7, D9
- Time Signature:** 3/4
- Staff:** Treble clef, key of A major (F# and C#).
- Notes:** The solo consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with triplets and slurs. The first measure is A7, and the second measure is D9.

Vocal Melody:

- Chords:** A7, D9
- Time Signature:** 4/4
- Staff:** Treble clef, key of A major (F# and C#).
- Notes:** The melody is written for a vocal line, with lyrics "The Rose Tree" and "The Rose Tree".

Ex. 7

G7

3

B 8-10-10 (12) 8 7 6 5 7- (8) B

T 9

A

B

10\3 10\3 10\3 8\1 2

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>>> CLASSIC RIFF

Cream's "Outside Woman Blues"

BY JESSE GRESS

CREAM'S PSYCHEDELIC-BLUES
cover of Blind Joe Reynolds' "Outside Woman Blues"—along with "Sunshine of Your Love," "S.W.L.A.B.R.," "We're Going Wrong," and "World of Pain," all from 1967's *Disraeli Gears*—marked the major debut of Eric Clapton's legendary "woman tone," a term likely coined from the song's title for a sound achieved by rolling the tone knobs on a humbucker-equipped Gibson back to "0" while blasting through a cranked Marshall stack. (Tip: You can see and hear E.C. demo the tone on his "Fool" SG in Cream's *Farewell Concert* video, recorded in November, 1968 at the Royal Albert Hall.)

But Clapton didn't use that sound to play the song's main four-bar rhythm figure, notated in **Ex. 1a**. Instead, trebly bridge-pickup tones characterize the riff, which begins with a pair of low open-*E* eighth notes, followed by a razor-edged staccato *E7#9* chord on beat two, and a hammered 5-6-root motif on beat three that gets transposed down a whole step to 4-5-♭7 on beat four. Observe the rests and staccato markers, repeat the same figure for bar 2, and then rest on the downbeat of bar 3 before commencing the two-bar, single-note response lick on the "and" of beat one. However, this low-register version of the lick is barely audible, primarily

because this is where the two-octave-higher woman-toned overdub shown in **Ex. 1b** enters the mix loud and proud. The lick, along with Ginger Baker's abrupt shift from a ruffed-up half-time groove to a bar of bass-drum-only eighth notes (via a single snare shot on the downbeat), followed by a bar of signature tom fills, creates a downright startling contrast. Dial up some woman tone and observe the staccato phrasing, quarter-bent G, pre-bent B (which often peaks slightly below pitch), and strategically placed vibrato. The fourth verse features another surprise: **Ex. 1c**'s secondary overdub, which harmonizes Ex. 1b in diatonic thirds.

Ex. 1a

♪ = ca. 114
 Gtr. 1

E7#9

N.C.

0-0

2-4 0-2 0

0-3-5-(7)-5-3-0

3 0 0-2 0

*pre-bend from 5th fret.

Ex. 1b

♩ = ca. 114 N.C.

Gtr. 2

The musical notation for guitar 2 is in 4/4 time, key of D major (two sharps), and is a non-chordal (N.C.) solo. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, including triplet markings. The fretboard diagram below shows the string sequence T-A-B and fret numbers: 14, 12, 14, (16), 14, 12, 14, 12, 14.

B1/4 *pre-B

T
A
B

14 12 14 (16) 14 12 14 12 14

*pre-bend from 14th fret.

Ex. 1c

♩ = ca. 114 N.C.

Gr. 3

*pre-B

T
A
B

13 12-14-(15)-14-12 13 12 13

*pre-bend from 14th fret.

Outside Woman Blues

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To my knowledge, Cream never performed the song live prior to their 2005 reunion gigs, except for one BBC radio appearance. (Hear it on *BBC Sessions*.) In both cases, the tempo is significantly slower and the first two bars remain unaltered, but E.C. opted for two different approaches to bars 3 and 4

(both sans woman tone) in order to cover the overdubbed parts on one guitar. The partially harmonized BBC recording illustrated in **Ex. 2** features a 16th-note $\flat 7$ -to-root hammer-on preceding four major third intervals—note that the bottom note of the pre-bent double-stop now peaks at $B\flat$ —while

the looser reunion version (**Ex. 3**) recasts the lick in a previously unused middle register. Notice the absence of staccato phrasing and pre-bends here, and how Clapton fills the previously empty downbeat of bar 3 with an open low *E*. So there you have it—“Outside Woman Blues,” three ways! ■

Ex. 2

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 98$ N.C.
Gtr. 1

*pre-bend from 14th fret.

Ex. 3

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 100$ N.C.
Gtr. 1

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THE BAY WINDOW by Mel Bay



The Minor Seventh Chords

Symbol (m7) = minor 7th

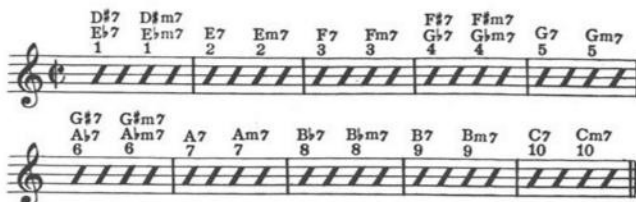
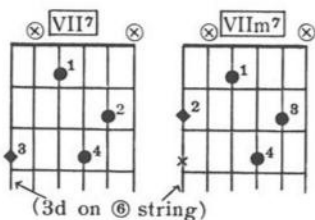
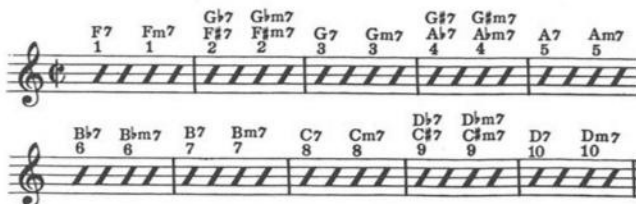
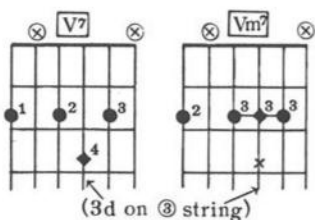
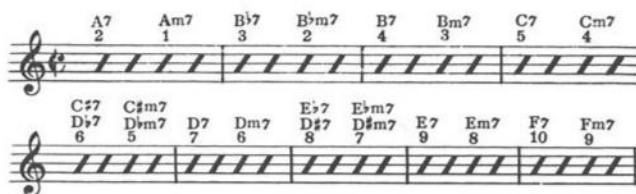
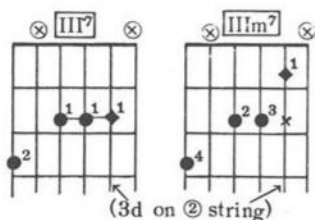
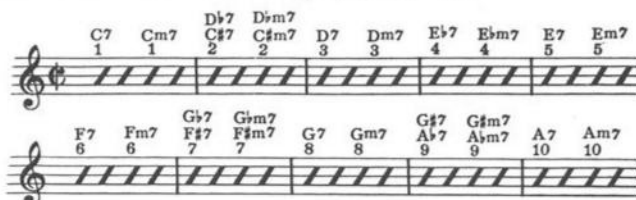
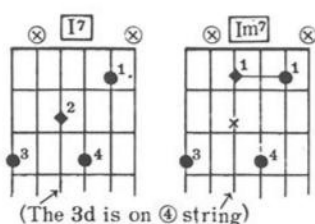
This is one of the most important chords in modern music.

It is made by lowering the 3d of the dominant seventh chord a half step, or one fret.

The 3d is indicated by the diamond (♦).

The "x" in the Minor Seventh Forms shows the position of the 3d before lowering.

Practice these forms until thoroughly mastered



26



FOR GUITAR PLAYER'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY, WE ARE COMBINING THE ARCHIVES FOR INTERESTING, EDUCATIONAL, and maybe even whimsical lessons from the magazine's past. Here, educator, publisher, and early GP supporter Mel Bay [1913-1997] offers a short take on minor seventh chords from August 1968. —MICHAEL MOLENDRA

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ROUNDUP



Six New Speakers

From Celestion, Electro-Voice, Eminence, Kendrick, Tone Tubby, and WGS

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

THE MAJORITY OF SPEAKERS IN PRO-duction today generally aim toward golden age '50s, '60s, and early-'70s tones—the perfect Greenback, G12 Alnico, or Chicago-made Jensen, for example. For this roundup, we check out six speakers that pivot from these cornerstones to

do their own thing. Some seek to capture classic tones, but with updated performance and broader versatility, while others are just their makers' best efforts at nailing a great-sounding guitar speaker by any definition.

All were tested in an oversized open-back,

birch-ply Fargen 1x12 cabinet (by J. Design Cabs), and pummeled with a tweed Deluxe, a Friedman Runt 50, and a custom-built AC15-inspired head (each of which have both 8Ω and 16Ω outputs) using a Fender Telecaster and a Gibson Les Paul.

CELESTION NEO CREAMBACK

NEODYMIUM HAS COME A LONG WAY SINCE EARLY SPEAKERS made with this light and powerful rare-earth magnet were panned with epithets like “bright,” “cold,” and “brittle.” Celestion is confident enough of its wiles with the substance to have added it to its popular Cream-themed series as the Neo Creamback (\$169 street), a U.K.-made 12" 60-watter available at 8Ω or 16Ω, with a 97dB efficiency rating (@ 1W/1M), which is in line with the Greenback tradition from which it stems. Of all these specs, though, its 4.2-lb weight is the one likely to inspire much of the excitement.

Celestion's John Paice told us that the Neo's voice was pitched somewhere between the G12M and G12H Creambacks, and I found that to be an accurate assessment. The speaker has a juicy underlying midrange hump that lends it to rock and roll, yet there's a little more crispness and bark there than M-variants usually deliver. Kept clean, the Neo exhibited good clarity and an enjoyable quickness on the attack, with just a little hair to thicken things up. It had a tad less bass than an H, too, yet was easily on par with most Greenbacks. Hit hard, this medium-efficiency 60-watter segued into luscious grind, with a familiar texture that was entirely Celestion. I felt the speaker stood up well to the G12M Creamback and Alnico Cream alongside which I A/B'd it—which is to say, it was different, but not outwardly inferior. If you're looking to retain a signature Celestion tone while dropping several pounds from your load, this tasty sounding speaker is definitely worth a try. celestion.com



ELECTRO-VOICE EVM 12L CLASSIC

ON ONE HAND, THE EVM 12L NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION. ON THE OTHER, a surprising number of players have avoided giving this speaker a shot due to preconceptions that it's purely a contemporary, heavy rock, high-output specialist. And it does all that with bells on, for sure (although I'm not sure how “contemporary” its origins are at this stage), but the EVM 12L Classic (\$265 street) is a versatile and great-sounding speaker by any measure, and it can excel in many scenarios that might just surprise you. Okay, let's admit up front that this entrant is kind of a ringer. Released in 2007 as EV's update of the long-running 12L, it's a well-established speaker with a reputation that doesn't need defending. That said, we felt it worth considering in this roundup since—as outlined above—it is often misunderstood. Give it a shot, though, and it's likely to suck you in. In fact, the EVM 12L Classic is a little like a great craft double IPA: once you develop a taste for, most of the competition sits a little lifeless on the palate.

I don't really need to expend any verbiage on this driver's abilities as a punchy, aggressive, yet impressively sweet-sounding lead machine when heaps of tube-generated distortion is applied, but it's far from the “full range” speaker that it's often billed as, and it delivers a rich, sultry character in its clean sound that is full, musical, and appealing without being harsh. But let's look at an unexpected application: this speaker made my custom AC15-inspired 18-watter sound better than any other speaker in the roundup—sound more like itself, I'd say—belying the myth that you “have to drive a 12L hard” to make it sound any good. On the other side of the coin, this whopping 200-watter will also handle almost anything else you can throw at it. In short, while it has its own personality for sure, this speaker lets you hear your amp for itself, rather than slathering on a lot of extra speaker distortion, although sometimes that's extremely cool. Yes, it's heavy (19 lbs), sensitive (and therefore, loud), and not for everyone, but the 12L sounds fantastic, and if you haven't tried one it's likely to surprise the hell out of you. electrovoice.com



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EMINENCE GEORGE ALESSANDRO SIGNATURE GA-SC64

THE “SC” HERE STANDS FOR “SOUND CIRCA,” AS IN 1964, AND this relatively new Eminence Signature Series model is so named because, rather than aping any single specific model of the past, its design—courtesy of respected boutique-amp and high-end gear designer and manufacturer George Alessandro—seeks to capture the essence of the best American speakers from the golden age of blackface-driven guitar tone. Available in 8Ω and 16Ω versions, the GA-SC64 (\$99 street) is a high-efficiency (100.5 dB) “upgraded vintage”-style speaker with a 32-ounce ceramic magnet, a paper voice-coil former, and a 40-watt power-handling capability.

I found the GA-SC64 a superb sounding and feeling speaker in all test configurations, for virtually all appropriate guitar styles. In general, the sonic touchpoints here are bountiful, firm lows (which are never boomy or overbearing); balanced mids, with a tasty pushed edge when hit hard; and silky, shimmering highs. The speaker is voiced with an appealing preponderance of warmth, yet it's crisp and detailed within that rich core. The GA-SC64 made a great addition to the 5E3 Deluxe's palette, extracting goodly twang with firmer lows and maximum upper-midrange clarity from the characteristic tweed granularity, while also proving surprisingly delectable and dynamic churning out the Friedman's Brit-rock overdrive. From clean to mean, in front of all test amps, it simply kept giving up the goods. Robust, playable, and just plain “right sounding” in so many scenarios, the Eminence GA-SC64 is probably the most broadly appealing speaker at this price—or just about any for that matter—that I've played in a long while. eminence.com

KENDRICK GREEN FRAME

EVEN IF ITS BRIGHTER COLOR DOESN'T ENTIRELY NAIL THE original hue, the Green Frame (\$149 direct) is Kendrick's version of the classic 30-watt Celestion of the late '60s. Its weight and power rating indicate that this 16Ω driver leans more toward G12H than G12M—both of which, in fact, wore the “Greenback” magnet covers in the day. In keeping with our roundup ethos, though, Kendrick adds a little fidelity and breadth to this American-made design, without sacrificing the vintage-voiced intentions.

Put through its paces in the aforementioned test rigs (I didn't worry about volume or master levels on the 50-watter thanks to the speaker's 80-watt rating), the Green Frame exuded that throaty “green” growl with a distinctive midrange push that helped the guitars punch forward, yet with the fatter low-end thump that made Hendrix and others fond of the vintage G12H variety in the first place. I find some contemporary H-types can be a little barky and nasal, but the Green Frame—while being decently articulate—had none of that, instead issuing a nicely rounded and well-textured tone that was clearly Celestion-based, but arguably more versatile than that often implies. It certainly works well for classic-rock in the genre's gloriously broad spectrum, but can also add grunt to your tweed or blackface amp with equal aplomb. kendrick-amplifiers.com





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(Creed, Alter Bridge)



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(Havoc)



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TONE TUBBY PURPLE HAZE

CALIFORNIA SPEAKER MAKER TONE TUBBY HAS REVAMPED

much of its lineup in recent years, and the relatively new Purple Haze model (\$325 street) is a great example of the broader offerings that have helped to revitalize the name. This 40-watt speaker, available in 8Ω and 16Ω, uses Tone Tubby's lightest hemp cone and a large 34-ounce alnico magnet. Combined, these ingredients are intended to produce a fast, detailed, and articulate response—which indeed they do—but the speaker has an enjoyably musical sweetness at its core, too, a characteristic that many attribute to the hemp cone itself. If we need to think in terms of familiar reference points, consider this an interesting blend of classic alnico-magnet Celestion and Jensen flavors, but there's plenty else going on here, too.

The Purple Haze responded to chimey clean tones, snappy country picking, and light breakup with an immediacy that made every note pop, but with no unpleasant harshness once I'd dialed in each amp to suit its characteristics. Classic modded-Marshall-style overdrive from the Friedman barked with more of an in-your-face authority than you'd hear from softer vintage Celestion-style drivers—a result that would likely suit fast or aggressive playing styles, but might fight a little with others. Ultimately, the Purple Haze formula takes Tone Tubby somewhat toward JBL or perhaps Electro-Voice territory in its clarity and responsiveness, while retaining the forgiving aspects of the smoky hemp cone, making it an interesting alternative for players seeking to step out of the potentially tired old vintage-inspired molds. tonetubby.com



WGS ET90

OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, WAREHOUSE GUITAR

Speakers has won a lot of fans for its impressive, and impressively affordable, renditions of many classic speaker designs and original re-workings of old standards alike. The new ET90 (\$79 street) follows suit, springing from the foundations of the Celestion G12-65 of the early '80s, which was "tweaked" by WGS into the versatile ET65 model, only to be further upgraded into this robust yet stunningly accessible 90-watter. This speaker has a ceramic magnet and the larger voice-coil and dust cap of the more contemporary-voiced British drivers, and a high efficiency rating of 99.94dB. Rather than just giving the G12-65 platform a little more power handling, though, it is designed for a broader, more open character, with more headroom and firmer lows, yet a goodly dollop of that thick Celestion-like British grind that so many players still desire.

Short answer: the ET90 delivers big-time on its intentions. This is a likeable, high-powered British-ceramic alternative, and the fact that it sells for less than everything else here only adds to its appeal. The 90-watt rating didn't choke the tweed Deluxe's chewy, gritty, pushed-6V6 goodness one bit, while the ET90 stood up well as a single-speaker solution to the Friedman's full 50 watts for both stout, rich, clean tones and textured Marshall-style leads. The ET90 displayed decent balance, no excessive frequency humps or harshness, and an appealingly British voice from every amp and guitar I tested it with. As such, it's highly recommended as a pocket-friendly speaker upgrade for a broad range of rig scenarios. wgs4.com



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>>> FIELD TEST



Fractal Audio Systems



AX8 Amp Modeler/Multi-FX Processor

TESTED BY BARRY CLEVELAND

APTLY DESCRIBED BY THE MANUFACTURER as an “all-in-one Amp Modeler + Multi-FX Pedalboard Processor,” the AX8 (\$1,249 direct) packs a considerable amount of the firepower of Fractal Audio’s flagship Axe-Fx II processor and companion MFC-101 MIDI Foot Controller into a compact, floor-based unit that sells for less than half the price of those two units bundled

together. That firepower includes Fractal’s proprietary Quantum amplifier and UltraRes cabinet modeling engines, as well as the same 256 amplifier and 179 “factory” cabinet models employed by the Axe-Fx II. The AX8 can also load “user” cabinet IRs from Fractal Audio’s Cab-Packs or third-party collections, or “custom” IRs created on the Axe-Fx II or using Fractal Audio’s CabLab

software. And although there are fewer effects offered in the AX8, all the staples are covered with multiple versions of each (43 reverbs, 18 delays, 34 overdrive and distortion effects, etc.), and the effects algorithms themselves are identical to those used in the Axe-Fx II. A fully featured looper and even a cool mono synth are also included.

The primary difference between the AX8 and its pricier sibling is that there is less overall DSP power on tap (two SHARC chips rather than dual TigerSHARCs), limiting the complexity of signal chains somewhat, especially those containing processor-hungry amps and effects. For example, it is possible to have a dual-amp setup in the Axe-Fx II, whereas the AX8 limits you to a single amp and cab. There are also fewer exotic features such as “Tone Matching” and IR Capture, as well as fewer I/O options, including a dedicated headphone output.

The AX8’s user interface is a thing of beauty. Fifteen knobs, six buttons, 13 LEDs, an 160 x 80-pixel LCD are all arranged within a 10" x 4" space, yet somehow everything is easy to grasp both physically and mentally. Eight LED-ringed knobs provide immediately accessible hands-on control of essential amplifier functions—Drive, Bass, Mid, Treble, Presence, Depth, and Master—whereas five “Soft Knobs” are assignable to various parameters within individual presets, and two additional knobs control the levels of Output 1 and Output 2 (which doubles as an effects send). Extensive editing using the buttons and encoders on the unit can be somewhat inefficient, but you’ll probably want to connect the AX8 to your Mac or PC via USB and do most of your editing using the free AX8-Edit software application, anyway. And speaking of free, Fractal frequently provides free firmware updates that are installed using the free Fractal-Bot application.

Functionally, the AX8 has much in common with the Axe-Fx II, including the concept of amp,

cab, and effects “blocks” that are inserted into a 12 x 4 Layout Grid, where they are connected in various ways to form signal chains within presets. The AX8 includes 25 different types of blocks, and how many may be combined within a preset is limited only by the CPU power (some are much more CPU-intensive than others). The AX8 contains 512 presets arranged in 64 numbered banks.

The footswitches are also arranged logically. The three “F-Switches” along the right side may be customized in more than a dozen ways, and either tapped or pressed, but generally have to do with bank and preset selection tasks. The eight numbered footswitches may also be configured in numerous ways, depending on your preferences. In the default setting the AX8 acts basically like a pedalboard, with the switches turning individual effects blocks within a preset on and off. And if the selected effect incorporates X/Y switching, where the same effect block has two stored settings, pressing and holding its assigned footswitch toggles between them. The numbered footswitches may also be assigned to up to eight “Scenes” within a single preset. Scenes allow you to do things like switch more than one effect block in or out simultaneously rather than pressing multiple switches, effectively expanding each preset into up to eight “sub presets” for a total of 4096!

With its steel chassis, aircraft aluminum side panels, and protective roll bar, the AX8 is as well-suited for the rigors of the road as it is for studio use and less-punishing live shows. Inside, audiophile-quality converters and other critical signal-path components result in pristine

audio quality, and Fractal’s “Secret Sauce” input and “Humbuster” output technologies further reduce signal noise. Even the footswitches are quieter and more reliable due to Fractal’s “Silent Switching” system, which eliminates mechanical contacts that can fail under duress.

The AX8’s rear panel contains a 1/4" input, 1/4" and XLR stereo main outputs, a 48kHz S/PDIF digital output, 1/4" stereo inputs and outputs for either Auxiliary I/O or Effects Send/Return, four expression pedal/footswitch jacks (two more than on the Axe-Fx II), USB and MIDI In and Out/Thru ports, and an IEC power cable socket for the internal universal power supply (no wall wart).

It would take more space than allotted here just to provide a complete list of the AX8’s manifold features—much less elaborate on them—but inquiring minds will find what they seek on the Fractal website. As for what the amp, cab, and effects *sound* like, do I really need to say more than that they are absolutely stunning and arguably unparalleled? Just check out a few of the countless audio examples available online or audition an AX8 for yourself if you doubt my word. The AX8 puts the bulk of the Axe-Fx II’s storied sounds and programmability into the hands of players at about half the price, making it an extraordinary bargain and deserving of an Editors’ Pick Award.

Kudos Sounds fantastic. User-friendly interface. Tremendous value.

Concerns No headphone output.

Contact fractalaudio.com





Boss Katana-100 and Katana-100 Head

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

RECENTLY INTRODUCED IN 50- AND 100-watt combos and heads, the new Katana series amps from Boss are highly affordable and loaded with features. The models on review here are the 100-watt Head and 1x12 combo, and while they share most of the same features, the Head differs by having a MIDI jack (allowing it to be controlled by a MIDI foot-controller or multi-effects unit), a speaker output (8Ω minimum), as well as a 5" *internal* speaker for practicing or rehearsals—all handy features that bump up the price by only \$20! We were able to audition the Head through a variety of speaker cabinets, including a Mesa 1x12 recto cab and a Bad Cat 4x12. The combo version does not allow for an extension speaker, and its stock ceramic-magnet 12 is hardwired to the solid-state output stage.

Setting aside for a moment the effect of different speakers—which may be reason enough to opt for the Head if you already own a few cabinets—both of these amps proved easy to dial in for the styles they're designed to handle. The

Clean sounds are crisp and have good dimension, and the Crunch mode serves up dynamically responsive tones that work well for blues solos and heavier rhythm playing. The Lead and Brown settings have tons of gain, and the latter—which is borrowed from Boss' Waza amp—delivers ballsy, slicing distortion tones that center on hard rock and metal. The Katana's reverb sounds very good and comes in three flavors—Plate, Spring, and Hall—which are selected with a button above the Level control that illuminates in green, orange, or red depending on the type of reverb you choose. The Booster/Mod and Delay/FX knobs work exactly the same way, putting a variety of effects at your fingertips, including boost, two distortions, chorus, phaser, flanger, delay (digital, analog, tape), tremolo, T-wah, and octave. There are 15 effects inside the unit and three can be used simultaneously. There are also four Tone Setting buttons that can be used to store all the *knob* settings (except the Master) by pressing and holding any of the buttons for

one second. This allows for up to four channels of instantly accessible amp sounds when the amp is connected to the optional GA-FC foot-controller, which also lets you select effects, tap in delay times (something you can also do on the top panel), and bypass the effects loop. You can also connect an optional expression pedal to control volume or manipulate an effect. A second jack on the back of these amps, labeled Foot Control, allows users to switch between Tone Settings 1 and 2 using a basic A/B switcher like the Boss FS-5L.

Both of the Katanas kick down such a wide range of tones that it would be hard to imagine a style that they couldn't be used for. I wasn't able to trim the Tape Delay repeats enough via the knob for a convincing slapback echo sound, but, by connecting the Katana's USB jack to a computer and logging onto bosstonecentral.com you can edit the effects, backup or restore sounds, and download dedicated effects. Via the software, users can select which of 55 effects



they want to reside in their Katana.

Overall, and considering the price of these amps, I found the quality of the amp and effects sounds to be quite satisfying. There's good touch responsiveness on the higher gain tones, and these 100-watters are definitely capable of holding their own in a band. The noise floor is very low, even on the most overdriven and effected settings, and the Katana Head's built-in speaker works surprisingly well for practicing and lower-volume rehearsals. Having this

feature on a head is so convenient that I'm surprised more manufacturers don't include it on their own amps. Ditto for the Katana combo's tilt-back stand, which is located on the underside of the open-back cabinet.

Boss obviously put a lot of thought into the Katana series amps, and based on what we've seen here, they are gig-worthy products that should have a lot of appeal for budget-minded players who want one amp that can be a veritable tool chest of tones. **B**

SPECIFICATIONS

KATANA-100 AND KATANA HEAD

CONTACT	bossus.com
PRICE	\$329 street; Katana Head \$349 street. (Katana-50 \$199 street; Katana-100/212 \$499 street)
CHANNELS	4 with 5 amp voicings: Clean, Crunch, Lead, Brown, Acoustic (for use with acoustic-electric guitar)
CONTROLS	Gain, Volume, Bass, Middle, Treble. Effects Section: Booster/Mod, Delay/FX, Tap, Reverb (each with a corresponding button to select effects), Presence, Master
POWER	100 watts, switchable to 50 watts and .5 watts. Standby mode maintains all settings while muting the output.
TUBES	None
EXTRAS	Built in distortion, modulation, delay, reverb, and other effects. Switchable FX loop. Aux In and Line Out jacks. Recording/headphone jack. USB port. Expression pedal control jack. GA-FC foot-controller jack. MIDI In and speaker out jacks (Katana Head only). Combo models have a built-in tilt-back stand
SPEAKER	One 12"; Katana Head has a small built-in speaker
WEIGHT	32 lbs; Katana Head 19 lbs
BUILT	Malaysia
KUDOS	A very flexible amplifier that can field a multitude of styles. Good-sounding amp and effects models. Connecting to a computer allows users to choose from 55 Boss effects.
CONCERNS	GA-FC foot-controller or a basic A/B switcher must be purchased separately.

Wudtone CP Vintage S-Style Trem

TESTED BY DAVE HUNTER

AS SUCCESSFUL AS IT HAS BEEN FOR more than 62 years, the original Stratocaster Synchronized Tremolo is also one of the most modified and updated guitar components out there. While some players chase vintage-correct tone, others seek improved performance from drop-in units.

The CP Vintage Trem (approx. \$156 at the current post-Brexit-vote bargain rate) from U.K. company Wudtone aims to satisfy both camps in a retro-fit replacement bridge. As such, this piece of hardware has the look and basic functionality of the original. The vintage-spec six-screw mounting, adjustable bent-steel saddles, bridge plate with bent rear edge, and cold-rolled steel block with threaded arm are all there. But look closer, and you'll discover half-moon-shaped divots behind each mounting-screw hole in the bridge base, which let the plate pivot forward



without hitching on the screw heads, beveled string holes to improve the strings' break angle over the bridge saddles, a thin steel "strike plate"—an additional component to the original Fender design—between the bridge base and the body to both improve physical contact and enable a smoother pivot, and a nylon sleeve within the arm's mounting hole to eliminate slop. All that, and it's just very well put together out of top-quality materials.

Installed in a good parts-caster to replace a generic vintage-style unit of decent quality (a

task aided by the comprehensive instructions Wudtone includes with the package), and after a little playing-in to get the new bridge settled, the CP Vintage Trem induced a firmer and louder tone from the guitar even unplugged. Amped up, this Strat exhibited a tighter, fuller low end, more high-end sizzle, better sustain, and improved clarity throughout the spectrum. What's more, the trem action was noticeably smoother, with excellent return-to-pitch stability. All in all, the Wudtone CP Vintage Trem is an impressive unit, and worth considering either for your new build or as an upgrade to an existing guitar.

KUDOS Improves performance and tone without sacrificing vintage-style looks. Well constructed.

CONCERNS None.

CONTACT wudtone.com

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Vintage 47

Mighty Mini, 1955 Twin Speaker Supreme, VA-185G, and Chicago Blues Tone Triple

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

"VINTAGE, TO ME, IS NOT ANOTHER copy of an old Fender amp, the world has quite enough of those. It's all the *non*-Fender amps circa-1947," says David Barnes, who founded Vintage 47 with the idea of building high quality hand-wired amplifiers that were inspired by the guitar tones he heard on '40s and early-'50s blues records—many of which spouted

from Valco-made amplifiers. Hence, this review of four Vintage 47 combos features three V47 models derived from classic Valco designs, and one—the VA-185G—which traces its origin to the famed Gibson EH-185 of the late '30s and early '40s; a.k.a. the "Charlie Christian" amp.

Now a partnership between Barnes and Steve Woolley (who owns and operates the factory

in San Pedro, California), Vintage 47's primary focus is low-wattage amps that are optimized for guitar and harp. Common to all models are octal-base 6SL7 or 6SQ7 preamp and phase-inverter tubes, Baltic-birch-ply cabinets with solid pine bracing, authentic-style point-to-point wiring (meaning no circuit boards), attached power cords, and niceties like stitched leather handles



and aged lacquered-tweed covering with inlaid beading. We tested these amps with a Gibson ES-330 reissue, a Tey Cleopatra, and a John Page Classic Ashburn with three single-coils.

MIGHTY MINI

This little blues shouter has a pair of inputs, Volume and Tone controls, and uses a tube complement consisting of a 6V6GT for power, a 5Y3GT rectifier, and an 8-pin 6SL7 in the preamp instead of the ubiquitous 9-pin 12AX7. Further distancing itself from other small single-ended “practice” amps, the Mini pushes sound out via a proprietary 6” x 9” speaker. It may look like something out of a post-war Buick Roadmaster, but this oval speaker sounds wonderful in this amp, facilitating a fat, mids-forward tone with a juicy, compressed feel and great top-end crinkle when you lay into it. Played with humbuckers and single-coils the Mini has ample clean range using the lower gain input, and it easily goes into distortion when driving into the more sensitive #1 jack. Having a Tone control is a plus here, and the Boost/Presence switch is also very effective for eeking more gain and bite from the circuit. Small in stature but rather buff in features, this dynamic little powerhouse is

perfect for rehearsals and recording, and would make a fine complement to anyone’s collection of pint-sized tube amps.

1955 TWIN SPEAKER SUPREME

For 1955 only, Valco made a 12-watt amp that used two Rola oval speakers, and Vintage 47’s development of its own 6” x 9” oval speakers made it logical to bring it back in updated form as the 1955 Twin Speaker Supreme. The new amp produces 18 watts via a pair of cathode biased 5881 tubes, making it one of the most powerful models in the V47 line. No biasing is required for this tube-rectified output stage—you can pop in different output tubes without breaking out a multimeter or oscilloscope—and the point-to-point

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT vintage47amps.com

MIGHTY MINI

PRICE	\$625 street
CHANNELS	One
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone, Boost/Presence switch
TUBES	6SL7 preamp, 5Y3GT rectifier, 6V6GT
POWER	5 watts
EXTRAS	Finger-jointed Baltic-birch cabinet. Point-to-point circuitry
SPEAKER	V47 6"x9"
WEIGHT	14.48 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Small and toneful. Excellent build quality
CONCERNS	None.

1955 TWIN SPEAKER SUPREME

PRICE	\$945 street
CHANNELS	One
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone
POWER	18 watts
TUBES	6SQ7 NOS metal-jacketed preamp, 6SL7 inverter, 5Y3GT rectifier, 2x 5881
EXTRAS	Finger-jointed Baltic-birch cabinet. Point-to-point circuitry
SPEAKER	Two V47 6"x9"
WEIGHT	26 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	A unique twin-speaker combo with attitude to spare.
CONCERNS	None.

VA-185G

PRICE	\$995 street
CHANNELS	One
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone
TUBES	6SQ7 NOS metal jacketed preamp, 6SN7 inverter, GZ34 rectifier, 2x 6L6GT
POWER	15 watts
EXTRAS	Finger-jointed Baltic-birch cabinet. Point-to-point circuitry.
SPEAKER	Tone Tubby 12"
WEIGHT	28 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	A cool choice for jazzers and others who seek more clean range than most small tube combos deliver.
CONCERNS	May not distort enough for some.

CHICAGO BLUES TONE TRIPLE

PRICE	\$888 street
CHANNELS	One
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone, Boost/Presence switch
TUBES	6SL7 preamp, 5Y3 rectifier, and 5881 power tube
POWER	7 watts
EXTRAS	Switchable Bias and Boost settings. Point-to-point circuitry
SPEAKER	Weber 10" and two Weber 8"
WEIGHT	30 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	A sweet sounding, one-of-a-kind blues/roots-rock combo.
CONCERNS	Limited volume.



wiring follows the original Valco octal tube circuitry employing a 6SQ7 NOS metal-jacketed preamp tube and a 6SL7 phase inverter. Also, as on the original, the finger-joined Baltic-birch cabinet sports lacquered tweed covering with a Tolex stripe circling the cabinet.

With three inputs to select from (2x instrument, 1x mic), the amp mates up easily with humbuckers or single-coils, and the Tone control provides smooth high-end rolloff to make the latter sound creamier, delivering soulful tones that have rich, musical character with lots of harmonic complexity. The amp responds dynamically to picking attack and changes in guitar volume, so you can roll straight into sax-y distortion when you turn up and pick harder. The two 6x9s provide more “paper” area than a single 12, so the sound is bigger and tighter than expected from such a small open-back cabinet. The amp maintains good headroom at louder volumes, and it’s gutsy enough to keep up with bass and drums too. So if you’re thinking of a cool alternative, to say, a Fender tweed Deluxe, the 1955 Twin Speaker Supreme could be it.

VA-185G

Housed in a taller, tweed-covered cabinet that sports a red/black racing stripe and features a screened opening near the top for improved airflow over the tubes, the VA-185G draws its inspiration from the Gibson EH185—an amp made

famous in the late ’30s and early ’40s by Django Reinhardt and Charlie Christian. Equipped with two 6L6s running in class AB, the amp pumps 15 watts into a 12" Tone Tubby speaker. The hand-wired circuit, which includes a GZ34 rectifier, 6SN7 inverter, and a 6SQ7 NOS metal-jacketed preamp tube, is designed for enhanced headroom and smooth overdrive characteristics, and the cathode biasing allows for easy power tube swaps, since the circuit basically self-adjusts to accommodate different tube types.

The VA-185G could well be thought of as Vintage 47’s jazz amp, as it stays quite clean sounding and exhibits only a mild amount of distortion when turned all the way up and hit with P-90s or PAF-style humbuckers. The volume range is suitable for smaller venues and the headroom is certainly impressive for something of this size and power. Since the VA-185G obviously leans toward cleaner styles it’s also a natural for players who prefer to get their distortion tones from pedals. All in all, this versatile amp presents itself as a toneful option for anyone who appreciates what electric guitars sounded like before the advent of rock & roll.

CHICAGO BLUES TONE TRIPLE

So named because it carries a trio of speakers—a Weber 10" in the open-back section of the cabinet and two 8" Webers in a semi-closed-back side portion—this unusual combo is based on

classic Valco circuitry, but adds a Bias switch to adjust power amp response, along with a Boost/Presence switch. The look is off-the-hook cool with the aged tweed covering with painted stripes, and the “bars” on the speaker openings add a touch of ’30s deco flair. Although it’s the largest amp in the V47 line, the Chicago Blues Tone Triple’s tube complement of a 5881, a 5Y3 rectifier, and 6SL7 in the preamp makes just 7 watts of class A power. That said, it sounds bigger and more badass than you might think, which isn’t all that surprising considering how much speaker surface area is pushing out sound.

The Boost/Presence switch has a big effect on how this amp responds, yielding cleaner sounds in the off position and a sizeable increase in gain and volume in the opposite setting. I left it on most of the time, and the amp could muster plenty of chewy, tactile distortion with single-coils or humbuckers. The Bias switch is much more subtle, but what I take to be its hotter setting worked well in combination with the B/P switch and Tone knob to facilitate a very useful range of clean and overdriven tones. A 7-watt power stage isn’t going to provide enough volume or headroom for every situation, but if a sweetly voiced amp that’s dynamically responsive and goes easily into power tube compression is applicable to your style and performing circumstances, be sure to take a look at this enticing three-speaker combo. 



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Magnatone Super Fifty-Nine MK II Combo

TESTED BY BARRY CLEVELAND

APTLY DESCRIBED BY ITS MAKERS AS “an American amp with a British accent,” the Super Fifty-Nine MK II has as much to do with classic English amplifiers as it does with the legendary “Mags” built in America during the ‘50s and ‘60s. Whatever its ancestry, however, this is one stunning combo. Aesthetically, the Super Fifty-Nine is quite dapper with its elegant Black Levant covering, made of 100-percent cotton book-binding material, and silver grille with white piping—while the illuminated lettering on the front panel (using nine incandescent bulbs)

provides additional pizzazz. (A limited-edition cream “Perfectamundo” version is also available.) Inside this hand-wired beauty are top-notch components and a pair of TAD EL34s serving up 45 watts via a Class AB push/pull configuration. The overall workmanship is solid, tidy, and meticulous.

Unique to Magnatone amps is the Varistor Pitch Shifting Vibrato (so named because it employs variable resistors, and Magnatone uses varistors made of silicon-carbide minerals as they did when they patented this Vibrato

circuit in 1956), a true vibrato circuit that modulates pitch rather than merely being a mislabeled tremolo circuit that simply modulates volume. The sound is quite, um, “vibey,” though not overblown, imparting appreciable sonic wiggle without inducing queasiness even at maximum intensity.

Conventional tremolo effects may also be had at the flip of a switch, ranging from barely noticeable amplitude oscillations to penetrating pulsations. Whichever wobbler you select may be switched in and out remotely using the



included two-button footswitch (a blinking light shows speed of effect), with the modulation speed controlled with an optional expression pedal. Both effects are spectacular.

While swooning to the super-groovy vibes, however, I kept attempting to reach over and crank up the reverb—but, alas, the Super Fifty-Nine left me as dry as it did high. Why Magnatone elected not to include an equally lush tube-driven spring reverb is baffling, especially when even the excellent effects loop is tube buffered. (Note that Magnatone offers tremolo, vibrato, *and* reverb in their Traditional Collection amplifiers.)

The Super Fifty-Nine's four inputs are reminiscent of those found on classic Marshall, Hiwatt, and other British amplifiers from the '60s and '70s (two Normal and two Bright), and if you really want to go old-school, they are bridgeable with a patch cable. Each channel has a distinctive personality and bridging them provides some additional oomph and tone-crafting capabilities—though the superbly voiced Treble, Mid, Bass, and Presence controls provide sufficient flexibility to navigate nearly any

musical situation. The gain staging, too, is brilliantly implemented, allowing you to dial up tones from crisp and clear to tantalizingly toothy to plump and nasty—all with the responsiveness of a finely tuned sports car. Whether playing a 1969 Gibson Les Paul Custom, a Fano Standard SP6, or a PRS Custom 24 Brazilian, I was able to coax a remarkable variety of sounds from the Super Fifty-Nine, and then finesse them to perfection by making minor adjustments to the controls. The amp can also get loud when appropriate, and cranking it way up accesses yet another layer of tonal possibilities as the power tubes contribute their own muscular grind to the mix.

The Super Fifty-Nine MK II is a tremendous amplifier. It embodies some key characteristics of storied amps originating on both sides of the Big Pond, while at the same time bringing something fresh and exciting to the party. This new generation of Magnatones was developed with input from Billy Gibbons and other 6-string luminaries, and one was recently spotted nestled in Jeff Beck's live rig. How much more validation does a reasonable person require? 



SPECIFICATIONS

SUPER FIFTY-NINE MK II COMBO

(also available as a head and 2x12 speaker cabinet)

CONTACT	magnatoneusa.com
PRICE	\$2,599 street
CHANNELS	2
CONTROLS	Normal Volume, Bright Volume, Master, Treble, Mid, Bass, Presence, Speed, Intensity, 8/16Ω switch
POWER	45 watts
TUBES	Four 12AX7s, two 6X4s, 12DW7, 6Z34 rectifier
EXTRAS	Tube-buffered effects loop. Remote Speed Pedal jack, Expression pedal jack
SPEAKER	12" Warehouse ET90 British Invasion 90-watt
WEIGHT	65 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Inspiring tone. Super responsive. Snazzy looks. Superb workmanship.
CONCERNS	Cries out for reverb.

Nady U-2100 Dual UHF Wireless System

TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLENDRA

I WAS FIRST SEDUCED INTO PURCHAS-ing John Nady's wireless wonder around 1979, when a salesperson at Don Wehr's Music City strolled down Columbus Avenue in San Francisco's North Beach while blaring out of a Marshall half-stack on the showroom floor. In 1983, the company provided me with head-mic and guitar systems to perform my multimedia rock show, *Streetbeat*, at Bill Graham's Wolfgang's nightclub, and, since then, I've used Nadys off and on for various projects.

The U-2100 (\$172 street) offers one super-inexpensive, dual-channel plug-and-play receiver and a choice of transmitters. I choose the U-2100 GT for my Collings 290 and the U-1100 LT with head mic, and I so loved the simplicity of a single receiver for my vocals and guitar, that I went *totally* wireless for the first time since 1983.



The U-2100 worked flawlessly in Bay Area clubs and rehearsal spaces with no drop-outs or other gremlins—even while trekking around bars,

posts, and patrons. Routed to my Vox AC30 with Roland Black Series instrument cables, my guitar sounded clear and articulate, and, during performances, the sound crew didn't notice any significant tonal differences between the U-2100 and a cable. Nice. The head mic, however, produces a somewhat thin timbre that needed attention to dial in a more robust and dulcet vocal sound. It's also fragile and can be finicky to position securely (I wore a military cap over it and had no issues).

Given its pricing, the U-2100 is a fabulous way for working musicians on a budget to decouple from cables and mic stands. I had a total blast rocking free and unfettered.

Kudos Freedom for way low bucks.

Concerns Tape that battery hatch shut. Delicate head mic. Thin vocal sound.

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Homer T Sonic '63 and Turbo '62

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

SCOTT "HOMER T" GERBER SAYS HE'S not trying to reinvent the wheel, just trying to make a great wheel at a great price. We got

where he's coming from right off the bat when we lifted these guitars from their cases and started sussing them out. Both guitars show a

deep reverence for all things loveable about early '60s Strats and Teles, and while neither has been overly dolled up to look like they've been trotted



Turbo '62



Sonic '63

around to every roadhouse in America (i.e., no cigarette burns, deep gashes, etc.) there's a definite worn-in coolness to their nitro-lacquer finishes and, notably, the *absence* of finish on the backs of their necks. Other details common to both are high quality pots, switches, and cloth-covered wire. Neither has a string tree either, which Homer says reduces the tendency for the strings to bind over the nut.

SONIC '63

Wearing a mildly "weather checked" Olympic White finish, aged plastic parts, and nickel-plated hardware, the Sonic '63 looks at first blush like a clean pre-CBS Strat you might find in some hip vintage guitar store. Look again, though, and the sub-\$2,000 sticker price snaps

you back into reality. A nice reality too, because all the key vintage elements are reflected in its build—something you'll notice as soon as you wrap your hand around that comfy, medium C profile neck and realize how good the setup and playability feel. I'd prefer the high *E* string to be slightly more inboard from the edge of the fretboard, but that's about it. The neck joint is very tight and the 6-saddle vibrato bridge (adjusted for downward movement with three springs) provides smooth bending and reliable return to pitch. The inverted output jack looks a little odd but it does make it possible to use cords with right-angle plugs. You can always take it off and flip it over if you prefer the stock look.

Our Sonic '63's Lollar Blackface single-coils delivered nicely balanced sounds at every switch

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT homert.com

SONIC '63

PRICE \$1,595 direct
NUT WIDTH 1 5/8", antique bone
NECK Maple, medium C profile
FRETBOARD Maple, 25.5" scale, 9.5"-12" radius
FRETS 22 "6105"
TUNERS Gotoh
BODY Ash
BRIDGE Gotoh Vintage-style 6-screw
PICKUPS Lollar Blackface
CONTROLS Volume, Tone (neck), Tone (bridge), 5-way switch
FACTORY STRINGS D'Addario EXL 110, .010-.046
WEIGHT 6.86 lbs
BUILT USA
KUDOS A great S-style guitar with the sound and feel of a vintage instrument.
CONCERNS High *E* string pulls off the edge of the fretboard pretty easily.

TURBO '62

PRICE \$1,795 direct
NUT WIDTH 1.650"
NECK Maple
FRETBOARD Rosewood, 25.5" scale, 9.5"-12" radius
FRETS 22 "6105"
TUNERS Gotoh
BODY Ash
BRIDGE Homer T Custom Vintage-Style with six brass saddles
PICKUPS Lollar Vintage T
CONTROLS Volume, Tone, 3-way switch
FACTORY STRINGS D'Addario EXL 110, .010-.046
WEIGHT 7.16 lbs
BUILT USA
KUDOS Quality build, tones, and playability.
CONCERNS Would prefer to not have extended screws on the knobs.

position. Played through a Carr Sportsman 1x12 combo, a Mesa/Boogie JP-2C (driving a 1x12 Recto cab or a 4x12 Bad Cat box), and a Boss Katana-100, this guitar's sounds ranged over everything from warm jazz vibes to creamy bridge-pickup distortion, with stops along the way for funky textures in positions 2 and 4, deep SRV-style overdriven neck tones, and twangy country. It's worth noting that Homer T also offers an HSS pickup configuration and will install any pickups that the customer feels will suit their needs. The bottom line is that while there are no real surprises here, the Sonic '63 is a thoughtfully crafted guitar that goes easily where you want it to and would be an excellent choice for any Strat aficionado looking for an inspiring instrument at a sensible price.

TURBO '62

Swinging an upscale vibe with its bound sunburst slab body, the Turbo '62 is optimized for players who love how a vintage Tele plays, but can also appreciate modern touches such as being able

to adjust the intonation more precisely than is possible with the standard three-saddle bridge. That's accomplished here via Homer T's own custom bridge, which retains the sonic qualities of brass saddles but uses six of them that are independently adjustable. Stripped of finish on the back and carrying 22 medium height/width 6105 frets, the neck has an inviting feel, which is enhanced by a compound-radius rosewood fretboard that gradually flattens from 9.5" to 12" for easier fingering in the higher positions. Other details include a 4-screw plate-style output jack, which better suits right-angle plugs and is more rugged than a vintage-style aluminum cup jack. However, Homer T's aim of making it easier to see and/or feel control settings by using set screws that stick out from the sides of the knobs inhibits pinky volume swells and tone rolling. I'd replace them with screws that are flush with the knobs.

As far as the stuff that really matters, the Turbo '62 has a lively and resonant sound when picked acoustically, and its vibrational qualities

make for inherently good sustain. The quality of the woods and hardware account for much of this, along with of course, the thin lacquer finish. It's a classic case of everything working in sync, and when played through the aforementioned amps, the Turbo '62 sounded like a good Tele should. The Lollar Vintage T bridge pickup transmits bright, pinging highs, but with plenty of girth, and the neck pickup balances roundness and clarity in just the right proportions. It has a robust response that's very useful for jazz and blues soloing, and it blends well with the bridge unit to deliver rich rhythm sounds that can be shaped via the well-voiced Tone control for fuller or slinkier textures.

Attractively priced for an American-made T clone, the Turbo '62 plays and sounds great, and it has just enough vintage vibe to give that feeling of playing something that's been around making music for decades. If you're eyeing the boutique Tele scene for something cool that your wallet can bear, you should definitely take a stroll through Homer T's website. ■



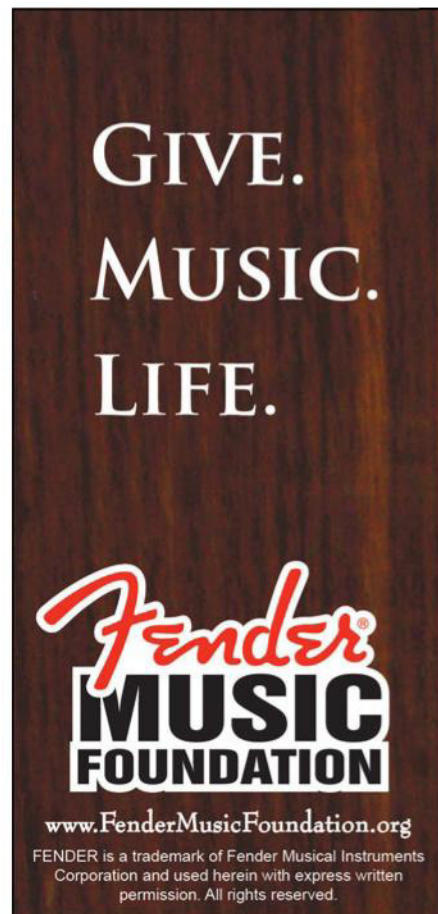
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>>> CLASSIC GEAR

The 1963 Selmer Zodiac Twin 30 Combo

BY DAVE HUNTER

BEFORE VOX, MARSHALL, AND HIWATT; before Laney, WEM, and Sound City; and before there was anything remotely like rock & roll in the British Isles, or anything we could call “the British sound”, there was Selmer. Unless you’re a horn player, or a fan of Gypsy jazz guitar, or a collector of lesser-known vintage British amplifiers, the name likely means little to you—but this brand was huge, and it has a long and compelling history in the music industry. That, and once rock did come to the UK, the Selmer badge appeared on some of the coolest guitar amplifiers ever made. Two-tone faux-croc-skin covering and a green “magic eye” tube that pulses in time with the tremolo? *Oui s’il vous plaît, matron!*

Selmer was founded by Henri Selmer in France in the late 19th century and quickly became a leading maker of wind instruments. The company’s UK branch was established in London in 1928. As the guitar became a bigger and bigger player in the jazz age, Selmer UK first imported American-made amplifiers in the early 1930s, then began manufacturing its own later in the decade, a venture that was aided by the purchase of the amplifier and PA company RSA in 1947, whose Truvoice brand appeared alongside the Selmer name for many years.

Once the guitar boom bit Britain big in the mid ‘50s, Selmer really hit their stride, and prior to the upswing of other big British amp brands,

just about every aspiring rocker got their start on a Selmer. Combos like the Standard, Professional, or diminutive Little Giant from the “blood & custard” cosmetics of ‘59-’61 or “blue & grey” period of ‘61-’62 are appealing in a delightfully tweed, retro way, but the amps that get players most excited are the “croc-skin” creations of ‘63-’65, and none more so than the mighty Zodiac Twin 30. This was the culmination of Selmer’s revelation that, “holy crap, we need to combat the AC30’s insurgence!” and, in the eyes and ears of many guitarists, it’s an equally mighty tone machine, but one that never quite got its due. This 2x12 combo developed around 30 watts from, initially, a pair of throttled-down KT88 output tubes in cathode bias—soon changed to EL34s—with a fat, juicy preamp powered by a 12AX7 and an EF86 pentode in each of its two

channels (the latter a tube used in the very first AC30s, and AC15s throughout much of the ‘60s). Further upsell points included the amp’s nifty six-button Tone Selector stage, one of which defaulted to a standard rotary Tone pot, and the juicy tube tremolo.

The Zodiac Twin 30’s tone is thick and warm, yet with plenty of bite and edge and a throaty roar when you turn it up. It has the cathode-biased amp’s rich harmonic overtone content in common with its Vox rivals, perhaps—which is accentuated by its use of Celestion G12 Alnico speakers—but is really a very different beast otherwise. Available for relatively easy money for many years, these amps have become extremely hip lately, and now often go for as much on the vintage market as a good early-’60s AC30.

Sadly, while the latter has been available to less well-heeled players in the form of several great reissues, there’s no way to acquire that Selmer sound without ponying up for the real thing. If you’re looking to just taste it, though, you’ll hear it in Hilton Valentine’s classic guitar part on the Animals’ “House of the Rising Sun” (and elsewhere on their first album). Paul McCartney purportedly used a next-generation Zodiac and a Fender Esquire to record his searing solo on The Beatles’ song “Tax Man.” In recent years, Jack White and the Arctic Monkeys have also gotten great sonic mileage out of vintage Selmers. ■

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

- > Two EL34 output tubes generating more than 30 watts RMS
- > Cathode-biased output stage with no negative feedback
- > EF86 pentode preamp tubes
- > Pushbutton preset Tone Selector
- > Two Celestion G12 alnico speakers
- > Mock-croc covering and “magic eye” tremolo speed indicator

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Surprisingly light to hold, the 1987's signature feature is its burled maple sides which are flavored with little explosions of individual style and character.

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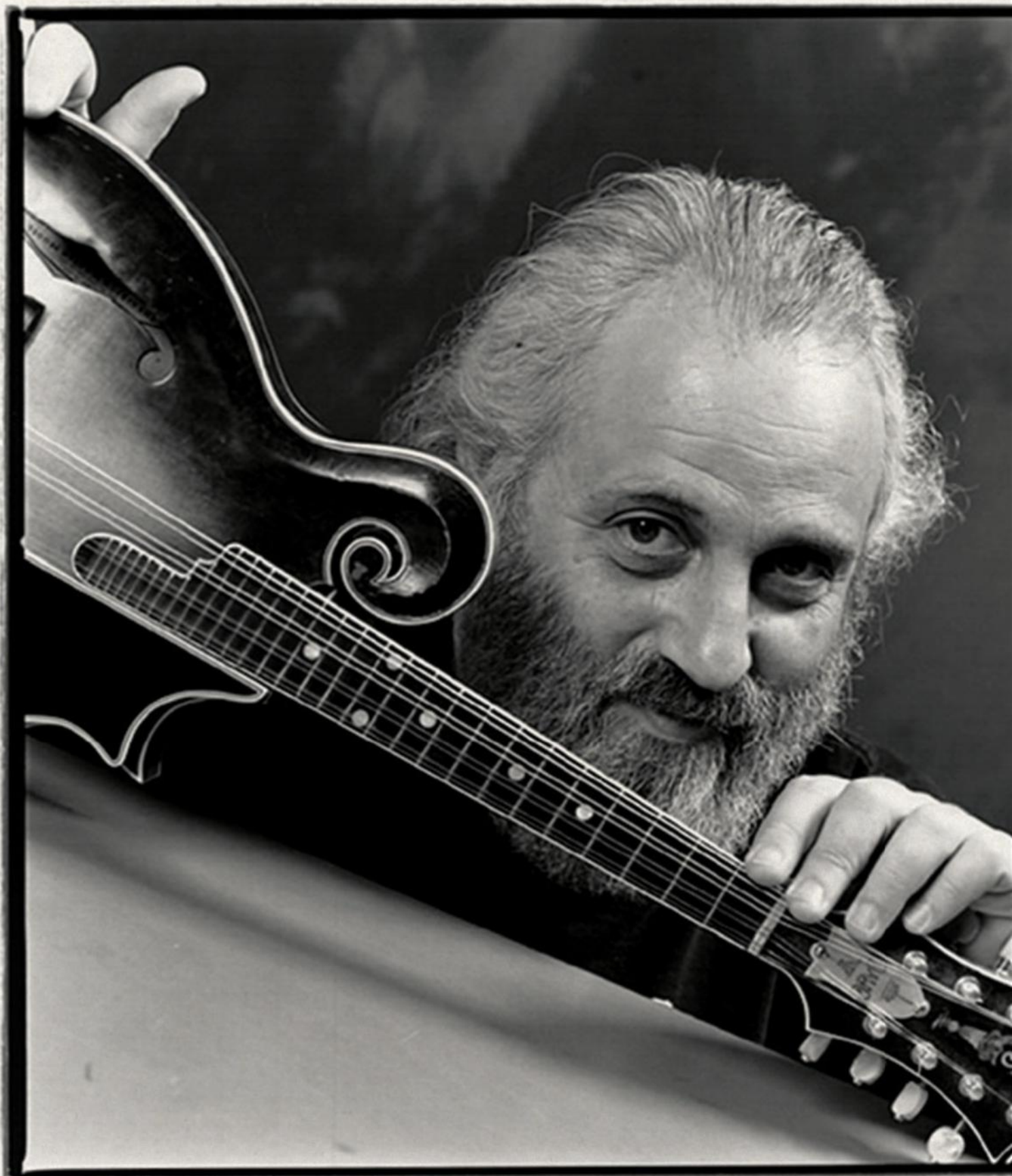
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TEMPLE OF THE DAWG

MANDOLIN MASTER DAVID GRISMAN'S UNDYING ACOUSTIC DEVOTION

BY JIMMY LESLIE

"I'M AN ACOUSTIC GUY THROUGH AND THROUGH," says the mando man who has done as much as anyone to expand the unplugged audience over the past half century. Via his past collaborations with psychedelic rock icons the Grateful Dead and his current duo with bluegrass legend Del McCoury, David Grisman continues to bring new fans into the fold. His collection of kick-ass guitar collaborations with Jerry Garcia and Tony Rice to Frank Vignola, Martin Taylor, and current Grisman's Sextet member George Cole is practically as extensive as his massive stock of mandolins. Dubbed "Dawg" by Garcia, Grisman was even instrumental to the appeal of the original *Frets* magazine that we now honor each month in *GP*. "I wrote 88 columns for *Frets*," he says.

Grisman founded the Acoustic Disc label in 1990, and he has an extensive music-download site called Acoustic Oasis. He's always involved in a million studio projects and releases oodles of gig material, but *The David Grisman Sextet* is his first disc of original compositions in a decade. True to Dawg's nature, it roams freely from bluegrass to jazz—sometimes within the same tune, or even the same lick. Furthermore, fans can experience five decades of friendship with McCoury come to life on the vivacious new double-disc set, *Del & Dawg Live!*

You've lived the mandolin life for ages. What's the biggest difference in the acoustic music scene compared to when you got started, and what remains the same?

I was living in Greenwich Village, studying English at NYU in the middle of the '60s folk scare. My interest in mandolin playing arose from my interest in bluegrass music, and I was encouraged and inspired by my mentor and friend, Ralph Rinzler. I explored all the available styles and artists through their recordings, and mostly obscure literature related to the instrument. I was able to hear and meet many of the great players from Bill Monroe to Jesse McReynolds—the inventor of crosspicking. He's 87 now, and I'm working on a project with him. The big difference in today's scene is the internet, and the enormous growth that even the "small" acoustic world has experienced over the past half century. What remains the same for me is my passion for music—especially in a historical sense.

What do you consider to be the major technological breakthroughs in the modern era of mandolin manufacturing?

There have been no major technological breakthroughs in mandolin building since the early 1920s, when manufacturers such as Gibson and Lyon & Healy developed the carved top and back. These mandolins are still favored by most players in this

FRETS

DAVID GRISMAN

country today. Builders including Stephen Gilchrist, John Monteleone, Mike Kemnitzer, and Corrado Giacomel have refined that concept to create fine mandolins today, but I still like the old ones. The wood has seasoned, matured, and adjusted to life as a musical conveyance here on planet earth.

Can you describe your relationships with mandolin makers Giacomel and Eastman?

I represent Corrado Giacomel in the United States. He is a wonderfully innovative mandolin builder from Genoa, Italy, that I met ten years ago. His J5 model is perhaps the most unique contemporary

design that has positive sonic and visual attributes. Eastman produces the Dawg Collection—three replicas of instruments in my collection, including the Giacomel. I still mostly play my 1922 Gibson F5, named “Crusher” by Stephen Gilchrist. It’s on both of my new CDs. Having said that, I love playing many different mandolins. I

Dawg Pack (from left to right)—George Cole with a 1934 Martin 000-28, George Marsh, David Grisman with his 1922 Gibson Lloyd Loar F5 mandolin “Crusher,” Jim Kerwin, Matt Eakle, Chad Manning.



THE DAVID GRISMAN SEXTET'S **GEORGE COLE** ON PLAYING WITH DAWG

“I TAUGHT GUITAR TO GREEN DAY’S BILLIE JOE ARMSTRONG for ten years, and I also taught bassist Mike Dirnt a little bit,” says Berkeley, California, resident George Cole. “I’m super proud of them, and I love their music. I was an electric guitarist until I saw Biréli Lagrène at Yoshi’s about 13 years ago. I was overwhelmed, weeping, and wondering. The guy was so great that the next day I sold all my electric gear, and bought a 1933 Selmer guitar with serial number 103—which was very likely played in Django Reinhardt’s original Quintette du Hot Club de France.

“I embarked on the journey of becoming an acoustic musician, and I eventually opened a show at the Freight & Salvage

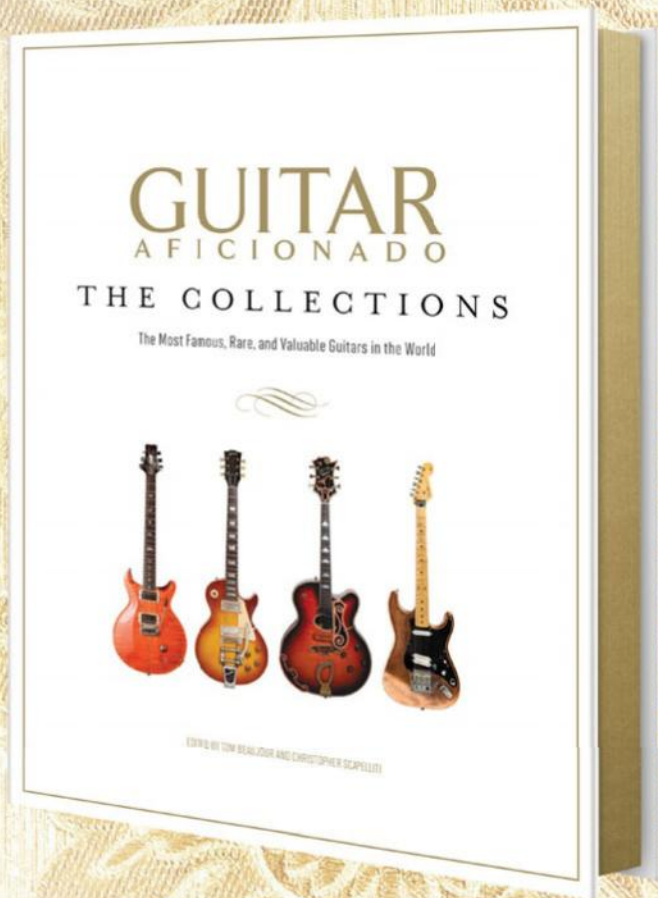
for the David Grisman Sextet. His label folks offered me a deal on Acoustic Disc/Acoustic Oasis. About a month later, I accepted a gig with Dawg, but once I started listening to what Tony Rice was doing on songs such as “16/16”—where he creates an incredible fusion of jazz and bluegrass—I nearly backed out. Instead, I knuckled down, and I learned a bunch of Grisman’s tunes. It was a complete revelation then, but now I’m proud to be a Dawg music scholar with a complete understanding about the timeline of great guitarists preceding me. Dawg is a great mentor and resource. The bluegrass scene can be intimidating, but I’m soaking up the music and the culture like a sponge.”

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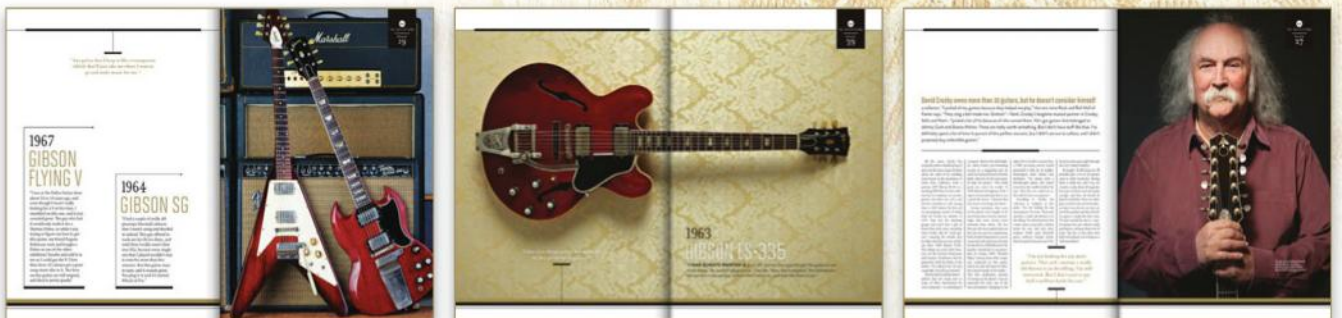
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produced four projects—three Tone Poems, and also Tone Poets—showcasing many different instruments and players, proving that although the car is important, it's really the driver that counts.

Are you still stringing up with D'Addario's EJ74 set, gauged .011 to .040?

Exactly. I helped design that set around 40 years ago, and they still work the best for me.

How did you arrive at the particular shape, thickness, and material for your signature Dawg picks?

The current Dawg picks have been around for a decade or so, and are made by D'Andrea. I like the contour, which is thicker and more rounded than most picks. I especially like the beveling. For many years, I experimented with all sizes, shapes, thicknesses, and materials. I used to use tortoise-shell picks, which are certainly durable, but I have found D'Andrea's material to be a bit less harsh, so I'm no longer trying to

duplicate the tortoise sound.

There has been significant progress in the area of acoustic amplification, but I don't notice electronics on any of your stuff.

As the song sort of goes, "There Ain't No Plugs On Me!" As a collector, I do own some electric mandolins made by Gibson, Fender, and Bigsby, but I rarely use them. I use Neumann KM 84s in the studio, as well as in performance with my Sextet and Bluegrass Experience. On duo gigs with Del McCoury, we use one Mikttek C2 microphone for both of us—instruments and voices—with no monitors.

Can you please detail the recording process of the Sextet sessions?

I usually use two KM 84s in a stereo pattern. We recorded the Sextet live in a pair of three-day spurts at Jeff Martin's Studio E in Sebastopol, California. George Marsh's drums were in a booth, and Jim Kerwin played bass on a platform next to

it. The room is an old barn, and we were positioned in a rather large circle. Flutist Matt Eakle and fiddle player Chad Manning stood next to each other about ten feet across from myself and guitarist George Cole. There were baffles between us and the other players.

The first tune on The David Grisman Sextet is "Bells Of Camogli," and it starts with what I suppose is your interpretation of actual bells?

The piece had its genesis in Camogli, which is a small town on the Italian Riviera. My wife Tracy and I were visiting a wonderful guitarist friend named Beppe Gambetta and his wife, Federica. I was sitting on the beach playing my mandolin when church bells started ringing. I tried to accompany them in the key of F# minor, and I formulated the tune from that experience.

"The Purple Grotto" features some nice trills in the intro, and then heads into

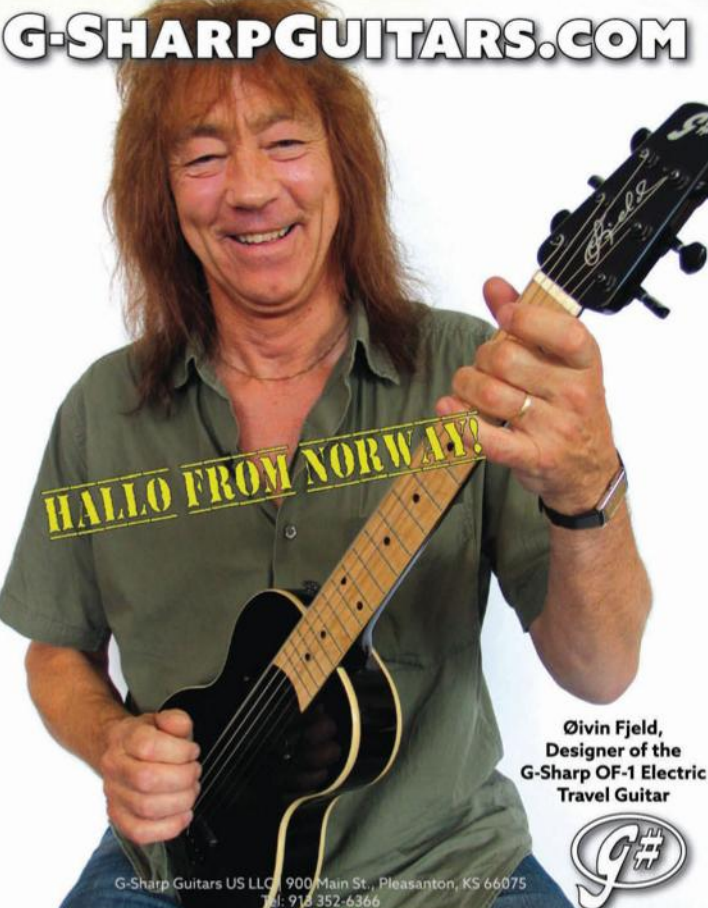
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a sort of Duke Ellington-style jazz rag.

That one is the kind of jazz tune that reminds me of my good friend, the late [radio personality and musician] Al "Jazz-beaux" Collins. Check him out.

"Slinky" features some hip chromatics in the main riff.

That riff took me about five years to write. Sometimes, a simple idea takes that long to realize. It's tribute to the Godfather of Soul, James Brown, who I heard several times at the Apollo Theater while I was a student at NYU in the mid 1960s.

That riff would make Jerry Garcia smile.

Jerry was so soulful. He was also a musical explorer and a great improviser. We had a great rapport, and we appreciated many of the same kinds of tunes, players, and styles. Our relationship was as comfortable as it was inspiring. One amazing thing about Jerry was that he had the same sound whether he was playing electric or

acoustic. He had the touch.

Notes seem to leap out of your instrument on "Dawg's Bounce." How did you achieve that pronounced articulation where each note is almost three-dimensional?

I used a Bacon banjo mandolin on that number. It has a very unique, insinuating tonality—which I found particularly well suited to an old-time, ragtime piece.

You clearly wrote "Del & Dawg" with Del McCoury in mind. What's unique about playing with Del on guitar?

Del is perhaps the greatest living bluegrass rhythm guitarist on the planet. His ever-solid backup provides a fantastic foundation, which inspires ideas, and creates an incredible groove that continues to propel me to wonderful bluegrass places. We're simply having fun with an idiom we've loved over the course of many decades. Del and I played our first two gigs together in 1966, so we actually have been

collaborating for 50 years!

You're over 70 years old now, and still killing it on fast bluegrass passages. What's your pre-gig ritual?

Well, hopefully it will be legal soon.

Who do you feel is pushing the mandolin's boundaries these days, and who is tearing up the traditional trip?

First, some of the great mandolin players who inspired me are Bill Monroe, Jesse McReynolds, Jethro Burns, Tiny Moore, Dave Apollon, and Jacob do Bandolim. Fabulous players pushing the envelope today include Andy Statman, Mike Marshall, Chris Thile, and Hamilton de Holanda from Brazil. Ronnie McCoury and Mike Compton are holding down the bluegrass tradition. For jazz, it's Don Stiernberg. For [Brazilian] choro, it's Danilo Brito, and for classical, we have Carlo Aonzo, Caterina Lichtenberg, and Chris Acquavella. There are many more. I'm surrounded! 🎻

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FRETS

REVIEW



TRAVELER GUITAR CL-3EQ

TESTED BY JIMMY LESLIE

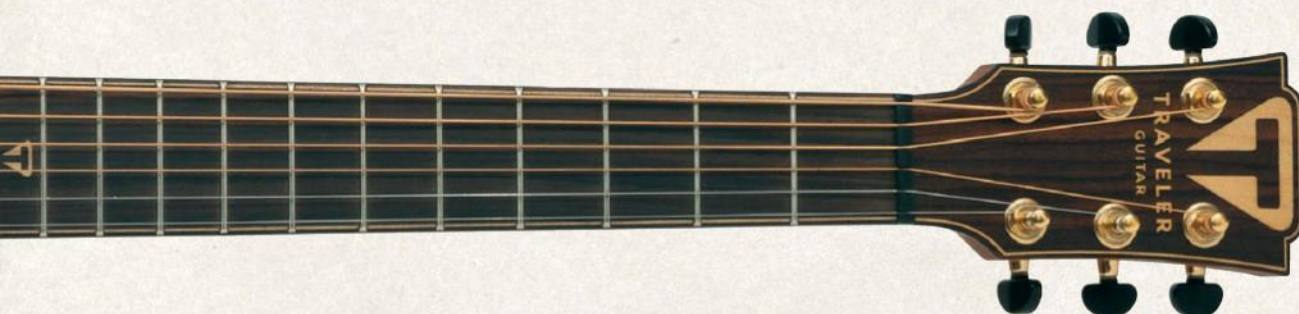
TRAVELER GUITAR'S LATEST OFFERING is a 3/4-sized dreadnought loaded with features not commonly found on "travel" instruments: a beveled upper top, a handsome rosette, nice binding, gold-plated tuners with black buttons, advanced onboard electronics, and, most interestingly, a cool partial cutaway indented from about the 15th to 18th frets that allows for better access to the high frets without eating up as much of the body's airspace as a full cutaway. It would be a wasted effort on many travel guitars, but since this CL-3EQ was designed and set up well enough to be actually playable

in the 12th position, I appreciated each iota of extra access. I noticed some fretting-out during aggressive play in certain spots, but, overall, the CL-3EQ handled more like a full-scale guitar than most mobile-minded instruments.

The CL-3EQ was also way louder and deeper sounding than expected. I usually have to back off the vocal volume a bit when singing along with a small-bodied acoustic, but that was not the case in this instance. The sound was not particularly rich with overtones, but it was fundamentally powerful. The Shadow Nanoflex pickup and preamp system

delivered a commanding tone that was surprisingly large in the low end when plugged into a Rivera Sedona Lite 1x10 combo amplifier. The onboard Shadow headphone amp sounded similarly strong through earbuds as well, and the Auxiliary input made jamming along with MP3s a cinch.

Weight and durability are always important considerations for travel guitars. I put the CL-3EQ to the test on a trip to Yosemite where I found it to be lightweight enough to feel fine backpacking in high mountain country, yet sturdy enough to withstand being drug around



in its gig bag on granite cliff tops, as well as stuffed and unstuffed into an overloaded Toyota Matrix on multiple occasions. I had to use a piece of tape to help secure the output jack, but the instrument arrived in that condition, so it seemed a matter of UPS abuse, not design quality or roadworthiness. In fact, the guitar's solid spruce top, as well as its mahogany back and sides, and all its interior bracing appeared as if a full-sized guitar's parts were shrunk by 25 percent in terms of length and width, but not thickness. The result was an instrument with a somewhat constrained sound, but one that could withstand being bumped around a bit.

The CL-3EQ is a well-thought-out instrument appropriate for oodles of situations from backwoods jamming to dorm room practice. It plays well enough to handle involved instrumentals, is loud enough for campfire sing-alongs, and its electronics are stage-worthy. Kudos to the folks at Traveler Guitar for continuing to blaze new trails along the increasingly crowded mobile guitar path. ■

CL-3EQ

CONTACT	travelerguitar.com
PRICE	\$399 street
NUT WIDTH	1.66"
NECK	Mahogany
FRETBOARD	Rosewood, 23.25" scale
FRETS	19, medium
TUNERS	14:1 gear ratio
BODY	Mahogany back and sides
TOP	Solid spruce
BRIDGE	Rosewood
ELECTRONICS	Shadow Nanoflex pickup and custom Shadow preamp with built-in tuner
CONTROLS	Volume, Treble, Bass, Phase, Tuner
EXTRA CONNECTIONS	1/8" Aux In, 1/8" Headphone Out
POWER	2 AAA batteries
FACTORY STRINGS	D'Addario EXP16 Coated Phosphor Bronze, .012-.053
WEIGHT	3.5 lbs
BUILT	China
KUDOS	Exceptional features, playability, and volume in a travel-sized package.
CONCERNS	Some splatty spots on the fretboard when played aggressively.



CHARLIE BYRD

"Anybody," intoned the gentleman guitarist in his rich southern drawl, "who can put two chords together is my friend."

Charlie Byrd has been picking on one guitar or another for the last 35 years. He owns "about 25"—mostly classics. Raised "in the hills" near Suffolk, Virginia, he starting playing guitar at seven with his father and other members of his family.

"Within six months," he smiles, "I was the best guitar player I ever knew!"

He taught himself to read music within the first year, and then took lessons for six months—which he claims, "weren't too successful. More than anything, I learned by observing and absorbing."

Charlie found out, too, there was a word for people who couldn't read.

"Illiterates! That's what they're called. Sure, some great musicians claim not to be able to read music, but they're not great *because* they can't read music. They did it the hard way, and they know it. Can you imagine taking a course in history without being able to take notes, to have to keep all that information in your head? The system of musical notation is over 500 years old. We can learn from what all musicians did before us."

The following monologue is a combination of excerpts from a discussion with Charlie, to be taken in the way of tips, covering a few of the things that have made him the guitarist he is today...

"Practice isn't just strumming on a guitar. You can do that all day, and learn very little, or you can practice only a couple of hours, concentrating, and learn a lot. If practicing becomes a bore, then put away your guitar—either temporarily or permanently."

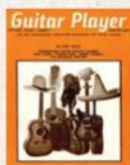
"Being a guitarist is like being in any other profession. If you're not really interested, you're not going to succeed. However, if you decide you *are* interested, then start off right with a good teacher and good equipment. Get to know your equipment, and how to get the best sound from it. A little thing like stringing a guitar can be tricky, depending on your particular instrument and the kind of sound you want. I use either Concertise or Savorez bass strings, and La Bella Trebles. If your guitar has a thin sound, use strings with more tension, or a heavier



gauge. If it is dull, get the brightest, lightest strings you can find."

"I don't use a pick—except on rare occasions. Usually, I can do anything with my fingers, and I can do it a little better than I can with a pick."

"There's a difference between recording and playing live. One is done personally, in contact with an audience, and it's the real thing. Recording is impersonal, synthetic, and artificial—a facsimile of your playing without the *soul* that you transfer to a receptive audience."



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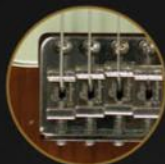


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GREG HOWE

SIGNATURE

The image features a man, Greg Howe, wearing a grey beanie and a black t-shirt, holding a red electric guitar. He is looking upwards and to the right. The background is a stylized geometric design with large black and white triangles. In the foreground, a large, detailed image of a black guitar pedal is shown. The pedal has an orange stripe across the middle with the text 'GREG HOWE'S SIGNATURE' and 'LICK BOX'. It features several white knobs labeled 'BOOST', 'LEVEL', 'GAIN', 'HIG', 'GA', 'LEVEL', 'GAIN', 'TONE', and 'TONE'. There are also three footswitches labeled 'ON' and 'OFF'. The text 'CARL MARTIN' and 'BY EAST SOUND RESEARCH DENMARK' is visible at the bottom of the pedal.

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A full-page photograph of James Trussart, a man with a beard and sunglasses, holding a custom electric guitar with a detailed, carved body. He is leaning against the front of a vintage, metallic car with a license plate that reads "LOUISIANA JAMES". The background is a clear sky and grass.

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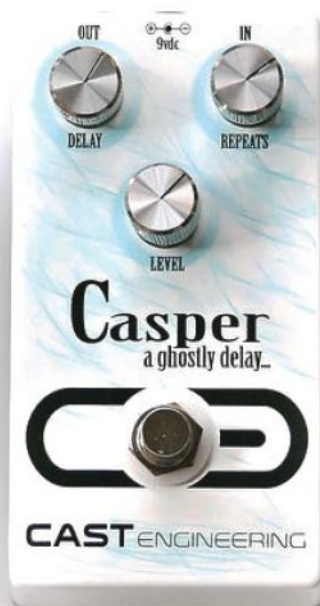
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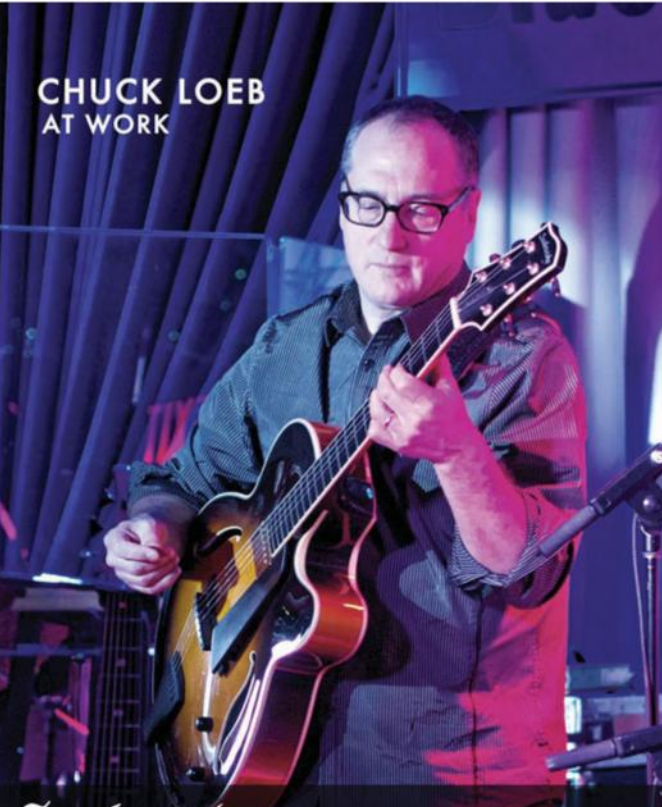
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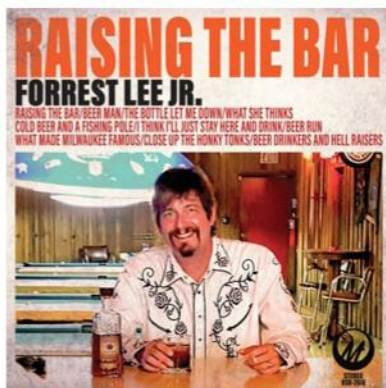
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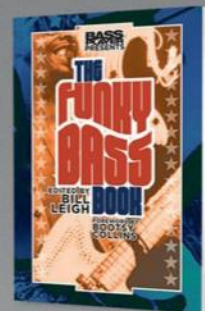
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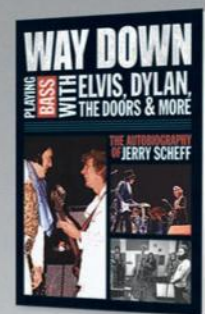
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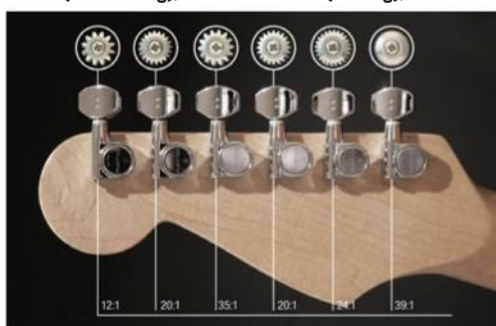
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FRANK ZAPPA NON-FOODS Bass, Sports, And Adventure

AS A GUITARIST and a leader, what do you expect from a bass player?

The important thing that I expect the bass player to do is to tell me what key I'm in. I'm not looking for notes faster than what I'm playing or implications of harmonic situations other than what we started out doing. I like to have a bass player with a good ear and a good sense of tempo, but the main function is to make sure that I know and that the audience knows what key we're in. And I like bass players that tell you the story by playing the roots every once in a while. A lot of these modernistic-type personages don't want to do that. They think it's beneath their dignity to play the bottom note of the chord. And that's not for me. I like somebody who tells me the key I'm in.

So you want to hear the I, IV, and V once in a while.

I want to hear *something* in there that just lets me know that I didn't go too far out to lunch, because if you start improvising and you get into a kind of trance—you're whizzing around out there in the zones—and the bass player goes out there too, then it's all over: The audience has completely lost contact with what you're doing. It just turns into *swill*. There's got to be some reference point so that the extrapolations can be comprehended. In other words, if you're in, say, the key of E, and somebody's playing an E note while you're playing an A, then you're playing a fourth or an eleventh, and it's recognizable as such and you can make it *behave* as such. But the minute the bass player starts playing something else, and decides to stick an F# down there, then that A that you're playing isn't saying eleventh-land information anymore: It turns out to be the minor 3rd of the second degree of the scale. And that may totally destroy what your melodic message was. When you're playing a melody note that you want to have function as an eleventh, and somebody puts a bass note in that changes the function of your melody note, he's doing you a great disservice.

Your parts are tightly arranged, yet back around 1974 or '75 your bass player on your tour had someone pointing the notes out for him onstage. Why?

Our regular bass player, Tom Fowler, had broken his arm, and that was the only way we could have finished the tour. And that's why we have a rule in the band now: "No sports for the musicians." There had been a game of touch football between the members of the crew and some of the guys in the band, and after that game—with ten shows left to play on the tour—I heard a knock on my door, and here comes Tom

Fowler with his arm in a cast. He'd just been tagged the wrong way, and it broke his arm. Now, what was I going to do? We had a show with really complicated bass parts, and here is our bass player with a broken arm. How do you get somebody out of nowhere to play the shows? You can't. We tried two or three guys, and they couldn't hack it. Finally, we wound up with one guy that was willing to stand there and have Tom point to the notes. We had all the 12 names of the pitches strung out on little cards on the stage, and Tom would stand there with a pointer and point to those note names as fast as he could, in order to help the bass player. But still, the audience is the one that loses out because they don't get to hear the music played the right way. And it's all because of *sports*. So, I try to discourage the guys from any kind of competitive sports activities while we're out on the road. I don't like to see them go skiing or anything like that.

Are the bass parts as critical to you as the drum lines?

They're very important. In fact, I like a bass part that you can sing along with. If it's a written song, I like to have a totally hummable bass part. That doesn't always apply to all the different types of things that I do, though. We did a song a while back that had one of the most hummable bass parts of 1982: it's "No Not Now" [from *Ship Arriving Too Late To Save A Drowning Witch*, Barking Pumpkin, FW 38066].

What if you're an average guitarist who is suddenly tired of playing music that's firmly entrenched in a pounding, steady beat, where the drummer sounds like the timekeeper for the oarsmen on a Roman slave ship? How can they abandon this?

I don't recommend that they do. I think that it's important that a person be able to earn a living at what they like to do. In other words, if you're a guitar player, you'll be a happier guy if you earn a living as a guitar player rather than as a gas station attendant. I mean, your chances for earning a living go down *rapidly* the more you try to play like what's on my albums. You'd be losing jobs all over the place. So, stay in 4/4. That's my advice to you if you want to be a happy guitar player. But if you happen to be some weird fiend and fanatic, then try it. Try to play along with it. Try to understand what's going on. But it's definitely not for the average guy.

What about people into free improvisation or unusual instruments, or even those who beat on gutter pipes?

Okay. If you call that music, and you like to listen to that, then go for it! What I'm talking about here is the personalized musi-

cal expression: "That's what I think; that's what I play." There's a direct connection between who I am, what I think, and what I play. It's *real* stuff. It's not squeezed into a little format that makes it acceptable to top-40 radio or what a club owner thinks ought to be played, or even what the average other guitar player thinks ought to be going on. I don't care about that stuff. It's a very personalized type of approach, and if you think that beating on drainpipes or salad bowls or anything else is *you*, then you should do it. That should be your musical message.

Do you think there can logically be a middle ground?

I don't think there ought to be a middle ground. It ought to be *polarized as hell*. I think it should be one way or the other. Look. If you're a guy that really likes to hear a drummer go *bonk, bonk, bonk*, like the oarsman in the Roman Empire days, and if you like to play along with a drummer that goes like that, you're not going to sound particularly enthralling if you're playing nine in the space of seven in the space of five in the space of three over six bars against the guy's *bonk, bonk, bonk*. You're going to sound like a sloppy guy. And it's not going to be fun to hear. But if you're in a format where you can take those chances and go out there and communicate with another musician who understands that kind of rhythm, and that's what you want to do, then you should do it. But to just toss in a few of those kinds of rhythms in the middle of a straight 4/4 top-40 number, it's stupid. The ultimate result of that will be that the audience that's trying to tap its feet to the *bonk, bonk, bonk* that the oarsman drummer is laying down is going to lose interest and think that you're just screwing up. I think that stuff only works when the rhythm section is doing it, too.

But a transition from one style to another must be made, regardless, and that can be difficult, especially if a guitarist isn't sure enough to make a firm commitment to a new approach.

Then they shouldn't, because if they're chicken, they should just do what they're doing. I mean, it's a big risk to take. When you try new stuff, you put yourself in a position where people can listen to it and say, "Aw, that's shit!" Okay? So anybody that doesn't want to take that kind of risk *shouldn't*. Let's face it: A lot of people start playing musical instruments because they want to make friends and influence people; basically they want to get laid, right? So if that's your thinking, then stick to the *bonk, bonk, bonk*, and get your costume together, and you'll be okay. ■

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IN NOVEMBER 1982, *GUITAR PLAYER* INVITED THE LEGENDARY AND UBER-INTELLECTUAL FRANK ZAPPA to provide a series of regular columns for the magazine. Given Zappa's infamous workaholicism and busy schedule, the columns started out as interviews, and, in practice, they made somewhat irregular appearances. But whether penned by Zappa himself, or culled from an editor's questions, all of the columns are insightful and humorous think pieces on what it means to be a guitarist, a musician, and a creative being. —MICHAEL MOLENDRA

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